

**THREE NEGLECTED SOURCES
OF SASANIAN HISTORY
IN THE REIGN OF KHUSRAW ANUSHIRVAN**



Michael Richard JACKSON BONNER

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ASSOCIATION POUR L'AVANCEMENT DES ETUDES IRANIENNES
PARIS 2011

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Her Majesty the Queen, when I met her in December of Brasenose College's quinqucentenary year, observed dryly that Iranian history of the sixth century was "going back a bit." Sasanian history is indeed chronologically remote, and its sources are difficult of access. Many people have helped me. This *cahier* began life as my MPhil thesis: thanks first to Mr James Howard-Johnston, my supervisor and to Dr Tara Andrews, who taught me Armenian. I am grateful to Dr William Cooke for editing my thesis meticulously and correcting many an infelicity. I do not write anything that I should not wish to hear aloud: my thanks goes to Messrs Jakob Hiller and William Rees, both of Brasenose College, to whom every word of this *cahier* was read—often whether they wanted to hear it or not. A first attempt at serious academic work requires encouragement. For this I am grateful to Dr Rika Gyselen and Prof. Philippe Gignoux, who made this publication possible. Many thanks to Miss Sophia Rose Hurst, who, for formatting purposes, kindly lent me her PC laptop, and to Mrs Adele Hurst, who drew the illustration on the cover.

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Michael Richard Jackson Bonner
Paris, Easter 2011
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INTRODUCTION

This *cahier* deals with three neglected sources of Sasanian history. These are Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, the so-called *Sīrat Ānūsharwān*, and Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. It consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and one appendix. The first chapter, entitled 'Sources of Sasanian History', concerns the *Khudāy-Nāma* hypothesis, which has underlain all modern historiography of Sasanian Iran. This hypothesis is explained, criticised, and revised—a revision which, in my view, is necessitated by closer examination of the evidence. This revision illustrates the importance of looking at other sources, broadening the field of view beyond Ṭabarī's *Annals*. The second chapter deals mainly with analysis and comparison of the texts that I have chosen, and the case for their utility is made. The third chapter consists of four test cases, in which our sources are put to work on issues of central importance in the history of sixth-century Iran. Other materials, ranging from Procopius' *History* to Chinese dynastic Annals, as well as archaeology, are used to test the sources. The result of these studies occasionally exposes flaws in Dīnawarī, the *Sīra*, and Firdawsī, but the portrait of Sasanian history offered by them is often better than that furnished by Ṭabarī, who is usually considered a first rate historian. The conclusion ties the thesis together in a narrative of Sasanian history from 484 to 579. A translation of Dīnawarī's treatment of Khusraw I's reign is found in an appendix.

The extraction of Sasanian material from later sources is difficult, and its analysis is problematic. Where and how such authors got their material are two very complex questions, and are discussed below, but it seems unlikely that we shall ever be able to answer these questions with certainty. It is unfortunate, but perhaps unsurprising, that other sources have not been subjected to the same rigorous treatment as Nöldeke and Bosworth visited on Ṭabarī's *Annals*. A thorough examination of the whole of Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, Ibn Miskawayh's *Tajārib al-Umam* (in which the *Sīra* is found), and the *Shāhnāma*, to say nothing of other works, would constitute an important contribution to the field. But such a task is too great for a brief and general study.

This study will focus on the reign of Khusraw Anushirvan (531-579). The time frame and amount of material is thereby restricted to a manageable level. The *Sīra*, of course, purports to be the autobiography of that king, and in great measure the restrictions of this thesis were

dictated accordingly. But the reign of Khusraw is the ideal place to begin any study of Sasanian Iran. Remembered to this day as a golden age, Khusraw's reign lasted forty-eight years and dominated nearly half of the sixth century. An age of reform in Iran, as it was in New Rome, this century saw a massive increase in the fire power of the Iranian state, showcased in Khusraw's extraordinary conquest of Antioch in 540. Lazica was reduced, albeit briefly, to a Persian protectorate, and the Yemen became an Iranian dominion. The military reforms in the sixth century made possible Khusraw II's rapid conquest of Roman territory in the seventh. Khusraw's tax reforms were adopted by the Muslim Caliphate, and remained almost unchanged. The disorders wrought by the Mazdakite heresy had plagued the Iranian state from the end of the fifth to the early sixth century, but it was in Khusraw's reign that they came to an end. His reign saw the rise of the Turks, and the annihilation of the Hephthalite empire, which had menaced Iran since 484. It was in Khusraw's reign that Muhammad was born. In short, to understand the reign of Khusraw I is to understand a great portion of Sasanian and Asiatic history.

This study proceeds from the general and the theoretical to the specific and the practical—from a theory of our sources' origin to an historiographical analysis of them, and thence to the writing of history. If a coherent and intelligible account of Sasanian history is our goal, we must not only develop an intimate knowledge of our sources, but we must also see them in action. But only when the content and worth of our sources are established, can we conjure history from the text.

I. THE SOURCES OF SASANIAN HISTORY

Historians of Sasanian Iran are faced with an almost complete lack of contemporary material in Middle Persian. The monumental inscriptions of the Persian kings are, of course, primary sources which the historian must take into account, but these are not numerous and were produced only in the earlier centuries of the dynasty. An historian looking at the middle or late period of the Sasanian era simply has no literary primary sources to work with. Scholars have therefore looked elsewhere for relics of indigenous Iranian history and the most impressive yields have come from Muslim sources.

Nöldeke was the first to mine Arabic historians for records of Persian history, and his work remains "a cornerstone" of Sasanian historiography.¹ He sought to overcome the lack of primary evidence by tracing later accounts of Iranian history to what he believed to be a reliable Middle Persian source. According to Nöldeke the *Khudāy-Nāma* was an official, dynastic chronicle, telling all Iranian history from the beginning of time onwards, originally compiled under Khusraw I, later enlarged under Yazdgard III, and now lost.² The Byzantine historian Agathias, however, seems to offer proof that such annals did indeed exist.³ This text was translated into Arabic in the eighth century by Ibn Muqaffa', a Zoroastrian convert to Islam, and all subsequent Arabic histories of Iran are supposed to have used his translation, though it too has perished.⁴ Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, the Iranian epic completed in New Persian in the eleventh century, is held to derive from the *Khudāy-Nāma* collaterally.⁵ Tabarī's *Annals* and Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* reflect this lost chronicle better than all other available sources. So runs Nöldeke's theory.

We must distinguish immediately between the original Pahlavi text of which the Arabic version was called the *Khudāy-Nāma*, the translation of this work, and the later works, whose authors are supposed to have

¹ Greenwood 2002, p. 328.

² Nöldeke 1879, p. xv-xvi.

³ One of Agathias' Persian excursuses is founded on what he calls βασιλικὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα (Agathias 1967, IV,30; Nöldeke 1879, p. xvi).

⁴ Nöldeke 1879, p. xxii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. iv.

used that translation. Hereafter it will be convenient to use the phrase 'Khudāy-Nāma tradition' to refer to all Arabic and Persian texts dealing with Sasanian history in roughly the same way. This appellation is not a disguised endorsement of the correctness of Nöldeke's theory: it is only a term of convenience. The original Pahlavi text—together with its title—is lost, and it would therefore be unsound to call this text *Khudāy-Nāma*, or the hypothetical Middle Persian equivalent *Khvatāy-Nāmak*.⁶ Such usage is common, but ought to be avoided.

Leaving aside for the moment the problems of Agathias' and Firdawsī's sources, which will be treated separately, we can immediately highlight three problems with the links between the Persian chronicle mentioned by Agathias, Ibn Muqaffa', and the later Arabic historians. First, and perhaps most obvious, is that we do not know anything about Ibn Muqaffa's translation because it is lost. It is therefore futile to attempt to link the work of any Arabic historian to Ibn Muqaffa's work so as to boost the credibility of the former. Second, the superiority of Ibn Muqaffa's translation assumes that the Persian dynastic annals contained, at least for the most part, sound historical information. This is a dangerous assumption, as the only test of a source's worth is its comparison to other texts of known value: a task which is impossible to perform on a lost source. Third—and this is perhaps the most alarming—Nöldeke's link between Ibn Muqaffa' and all subsequent historians is assumed, but not proven.⁷ Nöldeke based this link on a similarity between Tabarī's *Annals* and *Kitāb al-Ma'ārif*⁸ of Ibn Qutayba⁹—two works which do not mention Ibn Muqaffa'. The elusive scholar is indeed noticed in another of Ibn Qutayba's works, *Uyūn al-Akhbār*,¹⁰ but this does not attribute any Persian history to Ibn Muqaffa'.¹¹ There is therefore no evidence that the *Khudāy-Nāma* of Ibn Muqaffa' is the

⁶ Čejpek, for instance, refers to this hypothetical text as though its name and contents were quite certain (Čejpek 1968, p. 620-621).

⁷ Greenwood 2002, p. 329.

⁸ Ibn Qutayba 1960.

⁹ Nöldeke 1879, p. xx.

¹⁰ We find, for instance (Ibn Qutayba 1955, p. 19): *وقرات كتاب لابن المقفع*: and (*Ibid.*, p. 38; p. 59): *قرأت في آداب ابن المقفع*.

¹¹ Rubin 2005, p. 67-69.

missing link between all Arabic histories and the historical works produced by the Sasanians themselves.

I propose to jettison Nöldeke's theory and start again. First, Ibn Nadīm's *Fihrist*, a catalogue of all books known to that tenth-century book seller, proves that Ibn Muqaffa' did indeed produce a work called in Arabic *Khudāy-Nāma*, which is explained as a history of the "lives" presumably of the kings of Iran.¹² That this was indeed what the title signified is proved by Ḥamza Iṣfahānī's explanation of *Khudāy-Nāma*, as "the book which, when it was translated from Persian into Arabic, was called *The Book of the History of the Kings of the Persians*."¹³

Second, Ḥamza Iṣfahānī proves that by the tenth century there were many Arabic *Khudāy-Nāmas*, and they were all different. Ḥamza quotes the scholar Mūsā Ibn Kisrawī, who perused several editions of the *Khudāy-Nāma*, and found that they all differed: a state of affairs which he explains by reason of translation.¹⁴ Bahrām son of Mardānshāh, also quoted by Ḥamza, claims to have gathered more than twenty editions of the *Khudāy-Nāma*,¹⁵ which he then describes.

Finally, one of Ḥamza's chapters is entitled *Some Stories which are Found in the Khudāy-Nāma, but are not Narrated by Ibn Muqaffa' or Ibn Jahm*.¹⁶ Nöldeke was indeed aware of these facts, but ignored them,

¹² Ibn Nadīm 1991, p. 214: *كتاب خدای نامه في سير* This title is listed first among a series of translations made by Ibn Muqaffa' "from the books of the Persians" (Ibn Nadīm 1991, p. 214).

¹³ Ḥamza 1844, p. 17:

خدای نامه وهو الكتاب الذي لما نقل من الفارسية الى العربية سمي كتاب تاريخ ملوك الفرس

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16-17:

اني نظرت في الكتاب المسمى خدای نامه وهو الكتاب الذي لما نقل من الفارسية الى العربية سمي كتاب تاريخ ملوك الفرس فكررت النظر في نسخ هذا الكتاب وبحثتها بحث استقصاء فوجدتها مختلفة حتى لم اظفر منها بنسختين متفقتين وذلك لاشتباه الامر كان على الناقلين لهذا الكتاب من لسان الى لسان

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24: *قال بهرام الموبذ اني جمعت نيما وعشرين نسخة من الكتاب المسمى خدای نامه*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64: *حكاية جمل ما في خدای نامه لم يحكيها ابن المقفع ولا ابن الجهم*

What follows this title is a mixture of fables and elements of an Arabic translation of the Avesta. Rubin interprets this to imply that the title *Khudāy-Nāma* was "a generic name for all the books dealing with Iranian history accessible to [Ḥamza's] contemporaries in any form" (Rubin 2006, p. 13). Given Ḥamza's explanations for *Khudāy-Nāma*, Rubin's interpretation seems unlikely. Might we not infer instead that by the tenth century works containing a core of native Persian history, called *Khudāy-Nāma*, had already been elaborated with foreign material?

insisting that only Ibn Muqaffa's translation could be the missing link.¹⁷ The evidence, however, suggests that by Ḥamza's day there were many works called *Khudāy-Nāma*. We cannot reasonably infer anything about these works, as none has survived. But if we accept a multiplicity of different *Khudāy-Nāmas*, we cannot assert a link between all Arabic historians of Sasanian Iran and Ibn Muqaffa'.

Ṭabarī's parallel narratives of Khusraw's reign, which will be examined below, suggest multiple sources for the same period. Another source, the so-called *Codex Sprenger 30*, as yet unpublished, has the same structure. Apart from Rubin's article,¹⁸ no scholarship that I know of has been devoted to the *Codex*. Its date of publication is not known, though Rubin's preliminary investigation of the text has shown that none of the sources quoted in it are later than the ninth century of our era.¹⁹ More importantly, Rubin has demonstrated that at least one of the sources of the *Codex* is clearly not anything like Nöldeke's *Khudāy-Nāma*, as the anonymous author claims to have used what he found in the "writing of the mobad, the herbeds of the Magi, and those who are versed in their traditions, in their customs and in their names."²⁰ Nevertheless, the similarities between the *Codex Sprenger 30* and Ṭabarī's work were apparently so striking to Nöldeke, that he felt able to use it almost as a manuscript of Ṭabarī.²¹ Does this mean that Ṭabarī used the same individual sources or the same document in which multiple accounts were imbedded? Rubin thinks that this is unlikely: the two texts differ considerably in many cases, and are probably not founded on the same material.²² Nevertheless, parallel narratives of Sasanian history, such as we find in Ṭabarī and in the *Codex*, prove that more than one account of that period was available to our authors.

It seems unlikely that we shall ever be able to explain how indigenous Sasanian history made its way into Muslim texts. In any case, the evidence rehearsed above suggests a variety of sources underlying later Arabic and Persian histories of Sasanian Iran. Rubin's inference of a

¹⁷ Nöldeke 1879, p. xix.

¹⁸ Rubin 2005.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 54-56.

²⁰ Rubin 2005, p. 56.

²¹ Nöldeke 1879, p. xxii.

²² Rubin 2005, p. 66-67.

Khudāy-Nāma anthology²³ has some merit as an explanation for the differences among the various texts within that tradition. We might also posit earlier and later recensions of an official Persian dynastic history, which were blended with fable and romance by various authors in the centuries following the Muslim conquest of Iran. Rosen has drawn attention to the blending of romances with genuine history within the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition, and suggests that Ḥamza Iṣfahānī was aware of this fact, and therefore distinguished among various forms in which history and fable were presented.²⁴ Be this as it may, Ṭabarī's two narratives and Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* might represent three such recensions in which apparently foreign material is blended in different ways with one or more native Persian sources.

One foreign strain can be identified immediately, for Syrian material has made its way into the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition. This was first noticed in the *History* of Agathias, whose excursuses, supposedly derived from the Persian royal annals, are marred by an obvious Syrian and Christian bias.²⁵ We may conclude on this account that Agathias tells us much less about the Persian royal annals than Nöldeke seems to have believed.²⁶ Greenwood's view is stronger: if we may fairly doubt much of what Agathias says about Persian dynastic history, might we be justified in

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁴ Having no Russian, I depend on Rubin's summary of Rosen's work (Rubin 2006, p. 17). Ḥamza, he says, regarded the works of Ibn Muqaffa', Ibn Jahm, and Ibn Shahuyh as "plain and straightforward translations," which he calls *naql*. The works of Muhammad b. Bahrām b. Maṭyār Iṣbahānī and Ḥiṣām Ibn Qāsim Iṣbahānī, however, used the putative *Khudāy-Nāma* as their "core," but external material was added. These Ḥamza called *naql aw jam'*. The work attributed to Bahrām Mardānshāh was called *iṣlah*, "an edited reworking of material from various sources." Rosen surmised that Ibn Kisrāwī's work, omitted from Ḥamza's list by scribal error, was described as *iṣlah* also.

²⁵ Yazdgard I, for instance, who is known as "the sinner" in other sources of the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition, is portrayed by Agathias as a virtuous monarch, and Balāsh, whom the Zoroastrian clergy hated for his clemency toward Christians, is called "gentle and mild" (Cameron 1969, p. 113). Agathias' "violent" bias against Pērōz is paralleled by Ps. Joshua the Stylite, and by the Armenian authors Lazarus of Pharp, Moses of Kalankatraci, Kirakos of Gantzak, and John Catholicus (*Ibid.*, p. 153).

²⁶ Nöldeke felt that Agathias's excursuses "stimmen...im Ganzen zu unserer arabisch-persischen Überlieferung" (Nöldeke 1879, p. xvi).

Oblivion,"⁴⁰ where Arsaces (an Armenian noble) was imprisoned, is actually attributed to this history. We do not know what else this work contained, for Procopius never again refers to it. We do not even know in which language this work was originally written, but if it was originally composed in Armenian as its name suggests, Procopius must have consulted it in translation. The anecdote regarding the "Prison of Oblivion" seems, in any case, to have no relation to the texts of the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition. Börm's suggestion cannot therefore be considered secure, and we must assume that Procopius' Iranian data did not come from this allegedly Armenian source. In any case, a Syrian quality within Procopius' early chapters on Sasanian history remains, and we can safely assume that he consulted a Syrian source.

Back to Agathias. Though the existence of Syrian accounts of Sasanian history can be established beyond reasonable doubt, not all of Agathias' excursus on Sasanian dynastic history came from the Syrian source suggested by Greenwood. Agathias' miscalculation of the duration of the Parthian dynasty, found also in later Muslim historians, suggests the influence of an official Sasanian text. Agathias reports that the Parthian Empire lasted only 270 years, but the real duration of the dynasty was nearly twice that span. All Muslim historians report roughly the same figure, reckoning the years of the Parthian dynasty as either 260 or 266. Ṭabarī, for instance, gives the Parthians 260 years, though Nöldeke amended this figure to 266, bringing it in line with the other historians.⁴¹ In any case, this error seems to have been a deliberate falsification and a piece of propaganda invented by the Sasanians themselves.⁴² Later Persian and Arabic tradition in fact lost nearly all

⁴⁰ Procopius 2006, I.v.7; 10-40.

⁴¹ See the apparatus in Ṭabarī 1893, p. 706.

⁴² Taqizadeh suggests in this connexion the Parthian chronology was deliberately shortened so as to "belittle the overthrown house [of the Arsacids]," and "make that period one of anarchy, with petty princes in the different provinces with no important record of them" (Taqizadeh 1937, p. 138). Other explanations are possible, though not as plausible. The explanation expounded by Yar-Shater (Yar-Shater 1983 p. 387) is probably the most credible alternative to what is outlined above. The Parthians adopted the Seleucid Era, but forgot its origin and confounded it with the coming of Zoroaster. Accordingly, the first Sasanian king is said to have reigned 538 years after the appearance of the prophet. The date of Zoroaster was traditionally reckoned as 258 years before Alexander the Great. The 14 years of Alexander's reign were then

recollection of the Parthians, and we may adduce in this connexion the total absence of the Arsacids from the *Shāhnāma*,⁴³ and the fact that the Arabic treatments, which are decidedly meagre, call them "petty kings."⁴⁴ This error suggests that Agathias' Persian excursus borrowed its chronological structure from an official Persian source.

Though an indigenous Sasanian chronicle may well be embedded somehow in later Arabic and Persian treatments of pre-Islamic Iran, it is not the only source reflected in this tradition. The arguments above have shown this. My objection to Nöldeke centres not on the mere inference of a lost Sasanian chronicle, but rather on his conviction that the entire *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition is grounded only in Ibn Muqaffa's translation of this one chronicle. We can be sure only that a variety of sources must underlie the later Arabic and Persian works, but it is not always possible to determine exactly what the older sources were. This state of affairs must entail a change in our attitude to the later Persian and Arabic histories of Iran.

Nöldeke's *Quellenforschung* can no longer increase our confidence in later texts. Trust in a source must not come from *our* ability to link it with an ancient and lost chronicle, but rather from *its* performance when tested against other sources. Since Nöldeke published his translation of Ṭabarī's *Annals*, scholarship has focused mainly on this text to the exclusion of many other works. Christensen's *Iran sous les Sassanides*,⁴⁵ which remains influential to this day, refers to other histories only in passing, and only occasionally compares them to Ṭabarī, who is clearly the chief cornerstone of the work.

Ṭabarī's *Annals* are, of course, a good work of history, and will probably always be important to the study of Sasanian Iran. This study, makes no attempt at a permanent diversion of scholarly interest from Ṭabarī. But in order to *add* to our knowledge of Sasanian Iran, we must look at as many sources as we can. Accordingly, the present investigation concerns three neglected texts: Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-*

added to this date and the result (272) was subtracted from 538, and a mere 266 years were left for the Parthians. This explanation, though relatively straightforward, does not elucidate why subsequent Persian tradition lost almost all recollection of the Arsacid dynasty.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁴⁴ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 706: l. 10; Dīnawarī 1881, p. 43: l. 10: ملوك الطوائف

⁴⁵ Christensen 1936.

Ṭiwāl, the so-called *Sīrat Ānūsharwān*, and Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. Many other sources could have been chosen, and the reasons for selecting these ones are explained in the following chapter.

II. A DISCUSSION OF THE SOURCES CHOSEN FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

In this section, I mean only to present the case for examining the chosen sources. The variety of information offered seems to justify their selection, but the style of presentation, which differs considerably among them, is also a factor. Dīnawarī resembles Ṭabarī in his presentation of annalistic history in prose, and agreement of these two sources suggests that a common tradition has been transmitted faithfully. Dīnawarī, nevertheless, often presents data in a manner peculiar to himself, and offers much that is not found in Ṭabarī. The *Shāhnāma*, the Iranian national epic, is perhaps the most controversial text that I have chosen. At the very least its prodigious length should have suggested to someone that it might contain *something* of value, but few have attempted to analyse it or use it in earnest as a historical source. The *Sīra* is the autobiography, or rather the *fragments* of the autobiography, of Khusrāw I, and is therefore unlike any other source involved in the present study.

II.1. DĪNAWARĪ

Dīnawarī, a Muslim scholar of Kurdish extraction, died in about 895, and this makes his universal history, *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, one of the earliest treatments of Sasanian Iran that has come down to us. Though this should have aroused interest in the text, the *whole* of Dīnawarī's work has never been translated into a European language, nor has a full commentary on it been published. Of course, Poushariatī has published translations of several passages of *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* dealing with the Arab conquest of Iran and its aftermath,⁴⁶ but her translation is not complete; the same publication also includes what Pourshariatī calls an "overall analysis of the contents of the *Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*,"⁴⁷ but this is rather more of a summary of Dīnawarī's prehistoric run-up to the

⁴⁶ Pourshariatī 2010, p. 261-286. Pourshariatī's publication of *The Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* (Pourshariatī 2010) was made after I had completed the MPhil thesis of which the present study is an expansion. I am grateful to Dr Rika Gyselen for giving me a copy of Pourshariatī's important study.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 253-260.

Sasanians, who are passed over in a single paragraph.⁴⁸ One of Nöldeke's excursions in his work on Ṭabarī includes an abridged translation of the episode involving the revolt of Nūsh Zād.⁴⁹ A description of the anonymous *Nihāyat al-Irab*, whose treatment of Sasanian Iran is similar to that of Dīnawarī, was published in 1900 by Browne,⁵⁰ who makes frequent comparative reference to *al-Akḥbār al-Ṭiwāl*, but none of its text is actually quoted. Bosworth's translation of the Sasanian portion of Ṭabarī's *Annals*,⁵¹ though published ninety-nine years later, likewise includes only brief nods to Dīnawarī in the footnotes.

Al-Akḥbār al-Ṭiwāl has been avoided because it is considered inferior to Ṭabarī's *Annals*. Criticism, however, has focused only on the structure of Dīnawarī's treatment, in which sources are blended into a single narrative.⁵² Suspicions that Dīnawarī altered his source material substantially are easily entertained on this account. Ṭabarī's method of laying his sources side by side without reconciliation is preferred, for this treatment is believed to show clearly that the author did not tamper with his material. But this objection to Dīnawarī does not seem valid. It offers no criticism of Dīnawarī's sources, but seems to assume outright that they are inferior to those used by Ṭabarī, whose sources, because of the way in which they are presented, appear somehow discrete and retrievable. But this is manifestly absurd to any reader of Ṭabarī's Sasanian passages: Ṭabarī occasionally attributes material to Hishām, but most of the time Ṭabarī's sources are attributed to no one in particular.⁵³

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁴⁹ Nöldeke 1879, p. 467-474.

⁵⁰ Browne 1900, p. 195-259. The date of this work is difficult to determine, and the question as to whether Dīnawarī made an epitome of the *Nihāya*, or whether the *Nihāya* is an amplification of Dīnawarī is extremely important—but is quite beyond the scope of the present work.

⁵¹ Bosworth 1999.

⁵² Yar-Shater 1983, p. 361.

⁵³ Consider, for instance, Ṭabarī's account of Pērōz' reign, which formed the basis of Nöldeke's analysis. At the beginning, information is attributed to Hishām son of Muhammad: حدثت عن هشام بن محمد قال الخ (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 872: l. 17). Not long thereafter new data is ascribed to "someone else": قال غير هشام من اهل الاخبار (Ibid., p. 873: l. 13). Next, a clearly unhistorical section (it refers to Hephthalites as "Turks") is traced back to "a certain person knowledgeable about Persian history" (Ibid., p. 878:

It seems, therefore, that comparative presentation and attribution of source material is neither here nor there. In his treatment of the reign of Khusraw I, moreover, Dīnawarī often presents the same information as Ṭabarī, though not always in the same way. Dīnawarī also includes the narrative of the revolt of Khusraw's son Nūsh Zād—a tale found also in the *Shāhnāma*, but which is absent from Ṭabarī's *Annals*.

Dīnawarī and Ṭabarī must have at least one source in common, perhaps some official Sasanian material, otherwise we could not explain their frequent similarity. But a close reading of the two authors suggests that they were probably not using in all instances the same sources for the reign of Khusraw I. Stark differences are apparent even when Dīnawarī's details are substantially the same as Ṭabarī's. The heresiarch Mazdak, for instance, is surnamed Māzayyār⁵⁴ by Dīnawarī, though Ṭabarī calls him Mazdak son of Bāmdādh.⁵⁵ The two authors also disagree on Mazdak's origin: Ṭabarī makes him come from Fasā, but Dīnawarī describes him as "from Iṣṭakhr."⁵⁶ The Christian overseer of Khusraw's New Antioch is called Barāz⁵⁷ in Ṭabarī's *Annals*, but Dīnawarī calls him Yazdfanā.⁵⁸ In the whimsical anecdote involving Bābak's appointment as general, the man seems to be called Bābak son of Bīrwān⁵⁹ by Ṭabarī, but Dīnawarī calls him Bābak son of Nihrawān.⁶⁰ The name of Khusraw's new city in which he settled his Antiochene prisoners is given by Dīnawarī as *Zabr-Khusrū*, whereas Ṭabarī calls it *al-Rūmiyya*,⁶¹ a name which Dīnawarī seems to acknowledge only as the

ll. 3-4): ذكر بعض اهل العلم باخبار الفرس: This is not the kind of work that would have won much approval from Ṭabarī's fellow jurists and historians.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, بن مازيار

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 893: l. 11: مزدق بن بامداد

The spelling مزدق occurs only in this line. Elsewhere we find مزدك (*Ibid.*, p. 885: l. 19; p. 886: l. 20) and مزدكية (*Ibid.*, p. 886: l. 20; p. 897: l. 1). Bosworth does not comment on this, and I cannot yet say whether it has any significance.

⁵⁶ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 66: l. 20-p.67: l. 1: مزدك له مازدك

⁵⁷ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 960: l. 2: براز

⁵⁸ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 71: l. 1: يزدفنا

⁵⁹ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 963: l. 14: البيروان بن بابك

⁶⁰ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 74: l. 2: بابك بن النهروان

⁶¹ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 898: l. 9; p. 959: l. 16: الرومية

name of the place current in his own time.⁶² Finally, when discussing the so-called *kust* system, which resulted from Khusraw's quadripartition of the empire, neither Ṭabarī nor Dīnawarī agree on the contents of each division. More importantly, though, Ṭabarī names each division after the cardinal points,⁶³ but Dīnawarī gives them ordinal numbers.⁶⁴

Elements present in Dīnawarī but absent from Ṭabarī are also telling. Dīnawarī regularly introduces anecdotes with the phrase "they say" followed by a form of the verb *kāna*⁶⁵—an expression never used by Ṭabarī, and one which, if understood literally, suggests that Dīnawarī used more than two sources. Dīnawarī's account implies clearly that Mazdak was still alive in the reign of Khusraw,⁶⁶ whereas Ṭabarī's treatment is equivocal, not specifying when the heresiarch was killed.⁶⁷ Dīnawarī records, as we have noticed, details of Nūsh Zād's rebellion,⁶⁸ and mentions also that Khusraw contracted a severe illness⁶⁹ when in the Near East, two facts which receive much fuller treatment in the *Shāhnāma*, but neither of which is mentioned by Ṭabarī. Dīnawarī includes a cursory mention of Khusraw's famous and half-legendary vizir Buzujmihr,⁷⁰ but he is absent from Ṭabarī's account.

⁶² This city is said to be إلى جانب المدائن تسمى الرومية (Dīnawarī 1888, p. 70: l. 18). Al-Rūmiyya cannot have been the Persian name of the city, as the word is clearly Arabic. It is also hard to see why Dīnawarī would have included this piece of information unless the city, or some part of it, was still recognisable, and unless al-Rūmiyya was the name under which it was known at the time.

⁶³ مشرق (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 894: l. 7), مغرب (*Ibid.*, l. 8), نيمروز (*Ibid.*), and انريايجان (*Ibid.*). The last "Ādharbāyjan" is used perhaps to avoid using the word "north," which according to Zoroastrian lore is the abode of demons.

⁶⁴ احد (Dīnawarī 1888, p. 69: l. 12), ثاني (*Ibid.*, l. 13), ثالث (*Ibid.*: l. 14), رابع (*Ibid.*) are Dīnawarī's adjectives for each quarter.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71: l. 9: قالوا وكان

Ibid., p. 72: l. 19; p. 75: l. 9: قالوا وكانت

⁶⁶ Otherwise, Khusraw would not have ordered that he be hunted down (امر بطلب مزدك) (*Ibid.*, p. 69: l. 8).

⁶⁷ Ṭabarī claims rather vaguely that "Mazdakite chiefs" were beheaded. Ṭabarī 1893, p. 897: ll. 1-2: امر برؤوس المزدكية فضربت اعناقهم

Dīnawarī 1888, p. 71-72.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71: l. 7: اصابه مرض شديد

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 73: ll. 18-19: كان اكبر علماء عصره بزرجمهر بن البختگان

This figure became the subject of a large body of wisdom literature, and he is often

The differences between Dīnawarī and Ṭabarī, outlined above, are not without interest, but not all can receive attention here. I will focus on what I believe to be the most significant discrepancy: Dīnawarī's narrative of the revolt of Nūsh Zād. This episode, also narrated by Procopius and Firdawsī, is discussed in detail in the next chapter. The episode of Nūsh Zād's rebellion and martyrdom is probably grounded in a Syrian source, and it is evidence of a hitherto unknown stream flowing into the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition. It will be clear that this source was not the sort of chronicle for which *The Book of the Bee* provides evidence, but it was rather a romance or perhaps a martyrology. Future scholarship ought to be on the lookout for more details which we might also ascribe to that same source, or to another similar one. More investigation of the entire text of *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* is needed before any firm conclusions can be drawn, but one telling anecdote should suffice to arouse interest. The reference to the arrival of one of Christ's apostles to the court of Ardashīr I and the ensuing story,⁷¹ found nowhere in Ṭabarī, seems to be a reminiscence of the apostolic mission of Addai to king Abgar of Edessa,⁷² and may be linked, on this account, to a Syrian source also.⁷³

mentioned in Sa'dī's *Gulistān* (see for instance Sa'dī 2008, p. 40; p. 43).

⁷¹ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 46: l. 18 - p. 47: l. 3.

⁷² This story appears first in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (Eusebius 1953, I.xiii.1-10). But the cross-pollination of the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition, if my suspicion is correct, must have come from the Syriac version (Howard 1981, p. 10ff).

⁷³ Pourshariati connects this story with the "substantial Christian community" of Dīnawarī's eponymous home town, Dīnawar, where an east Syrian monastery is known to have existed (Pourshariati 2010, p. 207). Perhaps Dīnawarī had access to a great variety of Christian apocrypha or what we might call phantasy literature.

II.2. THE SHĀHNĀMA

The *Shāhnāma*, the Iranian national epic begun by Daqīqī and completed by Firdawsī in about 1010, narrates the entire history of Iran from mythical times down to the Arabian conquest. The value of Firdawsī's testimony has generally been respected by continental and Russian historians,⁷⁴ but Anglo-Saxon prejudice against the Iranian epic,⁷⁵ despite the objections to it raised by Rubin,⁷⁶ has made it difficult to use this poem as an historical source. Nöldeke has observed that the *Shāhnāma* is independent of the Arabic historians, but nevertheless grounded in the same tradition. Few would seriously question this view today, but little scholarship has looked into the matter deeply.

Firdawsī's sources have generally been isolated not from an examination of the poem itself, but rather from one of the two introductions that are often included in manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*.⁷⁷ Nöldeke's judgment is based on the younger, fifteenth-century introduction.⁷⁸ A translation (says Nöldeke) of a document written in Pahlavi under the reign of Yazdgard III by a *dihqān* named Dānīshvar is said to have been prepared by a team of scholars in the tenth century. The Pahlavi document was in turn based on an earlier work, supposedly written under the reign of Khusraw I. The team, commissioned by Abū Manšūr 'Abd al-Razzāq b. 'Abd al-Farrukh, governor of Tūs during the first twenty years of Firdawsī's life, prepared what has come to be called the Prose *Shāhnāma*. This account, though relatively plausible, is probably not accurate. This text is too young to be preferred to the much older introduction, and the notion that there was but a single document involved is unrealistic. The earlier introduction to the *Shāhnāma* is probably more trustworthy. No process of translation is mentioned, and

⁷⁴ The Russian reference manual put into English as *Central Asia: Pre-Historic to Pre-Modern Times* (originally published in 1989) can be considered representative of the non-Anglo-Saxon school (Gafurov 2005, p. 315-319). Firdawsī's poem is discussed without the host of caveats which might have been expected.

⁷⁵ "Anecdote has run wild in Firdawsī's version," etc. (Howard-Johnston 1995, p. 171).

⁷⁶ Rubin 1995, p. 234-6.

⁷⁷ A notable exception is Christensen's work on Mazdak, in which the author attempts to prove that a document called the *Mazdaknāmagh* lies behind Firdawsī's discussion of Mazdakite doctrine (Christensen 1925, p. 65-66).

⁷⁸ This is the so-called *Baysonghur Introduction* (Nöldeke 1879, p. xxiii).

the Prose *Shāhnāma* produced in this account is a compilation of many Pahlavi books.⁷⁹ The absence of any mention of translation does not mean that none took place, but the significant point in the older introduction is that Firdawsī's work was based on many sources. An overview of Firdawsī's treatment of Khusraw I, and the sheer variety of information presented, suffices to prove this.

Wherever Firdawsī accords with the rest of the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition, we can be fairly certain that an official Sasanian source is responsible for the agreement. Khusraw's throne speech, his reforms, internal wars, and building projects, his war with New Rome,⁸⁰ the Turkish overthrow of the Hephthalites and subsequent alliance with Khusraw⁸¹ are probably grounded in a Persian dynastic history with an official, royal sanction. Other sections, however, are certainly historical, but information from other sources has been added. The insurrection of Khusraw's son, Nūsh Zād,⁸² for instance, is a blend of genuine history and historical romance—most probably, given the Christian theme of the episode, of Syriac origin. Dīnawarī, as I argue below, used this source or perhaps one derived from the same tradition. The tales of Buzurjmihr, Khusraw's great vizier,⁸³ and Bābak⁸⁴ may well be based on historical persons, but are for the most part fictions grounded in the traditions of Near Eastern wisdom literature. The narrative of Bābak, though, sheds some light on Khusraw's military reforms. The coming of the game of the chess to Iran and the corresponding invention of *nard*⁸⁵ (perhaps a kind of backgammon), the story of the fight between Talkhand and Gav,⁸⁶ and the tale of the arrival and translation of the Bidpāi fables⁸⁷ are of Indian origin, and bear witness perhaps to a diffusion of Indian culture

⁷⁹ "...the main task was here of making (namely compiling) a book, rather than translating it (in which case the words to be used should have been *az zabān...ba zabān...gardānidan*, as elsewhere in the introduction" (Rubin 2006, p. 20).

⁸⁰ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 15-178; ll. 294-742. The story of Bābak intervenes.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 1756-2324.

⁸² *Ibid.*, ll. 743-980.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, ll. 981-1755; ll. 2387-2425.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 180-254.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 2663-2767.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, ll. 3024-3235.

⁸⁷ Commonly called *Kalila and Dimna* (*Ibid.*, ll. 3383-3600).

into Iran following the downfall of the Hephthalites. Khusraw's letter to his son Hurmazd,⁸⁸ his nomination of him as his successor,⁸⁹ and his will⁹⁰ are probably not what they purport to be, but have a gnomic and hieratic quality, and may actually be religious texts. We are reminded of tales of the *Thousand and One Nights* genre in the story of Caesar's messenger who brings a jewelled box which only Buzurjmihr can open,⁹¹ the story of the wisdom of Khusraw,⁹² and the dialogue between Khusraw and the boot seller.⁹³ It is highly unlikely that all these episodes came from the same source, and Firdawsī certainly did not invent them.

Diversity of material is occasionally signalled in Firdawsī's narrative, and he often claims merely to have "versified" a tale that he found elsewhere. The beginning of Nūsh Zād's insurrection, for instance, is attributed to an old *dihqān*, which the poet merely put into metrical form.⁹⁴ This attribution seems to be a literary *topos*, but it may also indicate a change of source. Correspondence adduced by Firdawsī (the letters exchanged between Khusraw and the Khāqān⁹⁵ for instance) may well be, in a sense, genuine. Though it is difficult to believe that Firdawsī had seen this correspondence in its original form, it is equally unlikely that he invented it from nothing. Such is at least suggested by the strange tension between the poetic idiom and the prosaic nature of the material, which may well be grounded in summaries and translations of the original letters. Furthermore, certain parts of the poem, such as the introduction, may be grounded in traditions of oral poetry.⁹⁶ It is difficult

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, ll. 3861-3928.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, ll. 4315-4445.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 4446-4517.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 3601-3695.

⁹² *Ibid.*, ll. 3696-3860.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, ll. 4220-4314.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, l. 776: بدین خویشان را نشان خواستم چو گفتار دهقان بیاراستم

⁹⁵ These are interspersed throughout the narrative (*Ibid.*, ll. 1763-2324).

⁹⁶ This is a somewhat curious meditation on old age directed to a young man, whom the poet addresses as "a heart-ravishing, tall cypress" (*Ibid.*, l. 1). It is difficult to comment on the significance of this, as the content is so different from the episodes that follow it, but it has the air of extemporaneous recitation.

to imagine a single, official Sasanian source that contained all the elements that we find in the *Shāhnāma*, and multiplicity of documents seems obvious.

The problems of using the *Shāhnāma* as an historical source are not well understood. Standard criticism centres on embellishment, exaggeration, and the possibility that the poet invented most of what he wrote. These problems are, of course, liable to arise in any composition touted as history, and throwing up such obvious danger flags and *caveats* before the *Shāhnāma* has even been properly studied is not helpful. It does not seem likely, though, that Firdawsī was prone to invention: his material must have been nearly unmanageable in length, and was probably rather high-faluting, grandiloquent, and pompous. Why would he have added to his trouble? In any case, we cannot afford to dismiss offhand every notice in which we find rhetorical amplification or embellishment. To take but a single example, Firdawsī's description of a huge wall, possibly that at Gurgān or Tammisha, calls forth the image of a colossal structure built "from the sea...ten lassoes in height, of stone and plaster, beginning from the deep and rising to the fountain of the sun."⁹⁷ Though this description is somewhat vague, and not without a certain comic element for the modern reader, it is clear from the lines that follow that Firdawsī has not actually lost his grip on reality. A mobad was appointed as its overseer,⁹⁸ the wall shut out the desert and was pierced by a huge iron gate,⁹⁹ and there were many frontier posts along it.¹⁰⁰ This is just the sort of data that can be tested against other written sources and archaeology.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 337-338:

یکی باره از آب بر کش بلند برش پهن و بالای او ده کمند
به سنگ و به گچ باید قعر آب بر آورده تا چشمه ی آفتاب

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, l. 342.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, ll. 342-343:

بیابان همه پیش دیوار کرد ...
دری نهادند از آهن بزرگ

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, l. 344: همه روی کشور نگهبان نشاند

¹⁰¹ Firdawsī's description accords well with recent archaeological investigations at the Gurgān wall, and it seems that it is this structure which the poet has described. See Omrani Rekavandi / Sauer 2008, p. 151-178; and Omrani Rekavandi / Sauer 2007, p. 95-136.

The *Shāhnāma*'s treatment of Khusraw I's reign offers much that withstands heavy scrutiny. Our confidence is boosted by Firdawsī's precise and often accurate geographical references,¹⁰² and by the names of rulers and ambassadors¹⁰³ some of whom are attested in foreign sources. We can also adduce Firdawsī's good knowledge of the political state of Asia in the sixth century, which includes awareness of a marriage alliance between the Turkish Khāqān and the Emperor of China.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore Firdawsī, as well shall see, is the only author to describe both the events that led to the Turkish and Hephthalite war and its aftermath. There is doubtless some embellishment and pomposity in this portion of the poem, but the historical core is sound, and the data yielded

¹⁰² An envoy from the Khāqān to Khusraw is forced to pass through Hephthalite territory, which included "all Sogdiana unto the Jayhūn" (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 1774-1775). We get a good notion of the extent of Hephthalite territory from the notice that they drew their troops from Balkh, Shignān, Āmūy, Zām, Khutlān, Tirmiz, and Visagird (*Ibid.*, ll. 1794-1795).

¹⁰³ The defeated Hephthalite king is called Ghātfar (غاتفار) (*Ibid.*, l. 1776), and Faghānīsh (فغانیش) is his petty successor (*Ibid.*, l. 1835). I do not find Faghānīsh attested elsewhere, but Ghātfar is *may* be the same name which Menander renders as Κάτωλφος (Menander 1985, *Frag.* 4.3.1; Grignaschi 1985, p. 239). Khusraw's ambassador Mihrān-Shitād (مهران شتاد) (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, l. 2152) is mentioned in other sources (for a discussion of which see Grignaschi 1985, p. 236-237). The spelling *Mihrān-Shitād* is preferred by Khāleghī-Motlāgh, but the variants *Mihrān-Sitād*, *Mihrān-Shād*, and *Mihrān-Shinād* are also found (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, p. 265: n. 20).

¹⁰⁴ First, we have Firdawsī's denomination of the Turkish ruler as the "Chinese Khāqān," and "Khāqān of China" (خاقان چین) (*Ibid.*, l. 1758); خاقان چین (*Ibid.*, l. 1870). The Chinese Annals note tribute paid to the Turks, mostly silk. Firdawsī also suggests that the Chinese provided troops for the Khāqān (*Ibid.*, l. 1777), but this is not noted in the Chinese Annals, and may be an exaggeration. Second, the reference to the Turkish and Chinese marriage alliance is brief but clear in a speech by the Khāqān (*Ibid.*, ll. 1959-1960):

سدیگر سخن آنک فغفور چین مرا خواند اندر جهان آفرین
مرا داد بی ارزو دخترش نجویند جز رای ما کشورش

The alliance to which Firdawsī refers seems to be noted in Chinese dynastic annals: an alliance was contracted in 551 in order to gain Chinese support in the overthrow of the Rouran, to whom the Turks had been vassals for some time, and renewed in 579 (Liu 1958, p. 7). For more on the Turkish and Chinese silk trade, see Ecsedy 1968.

is fuller than that of any other source, as we shall see in chapter III.4. Comparison of Firdawsī's poem with the independent testimony of the Chinese dynastic annals, Menander's History, and archaeological evidence proves this.

II.3. THE *SĪRAT ĀNŪSHARWĀN*

Ibn Miskawayh's *Tajārib al-Umam* includes a document that purports to be an extract from the autobiography of Khusraw Anushirvan. The so-called *Sīrat Ānūsharwān* is, however, entirely in Arabic and can at best be only a translation of such an autobiography. We have no way of knowing whether the text really is Khusraw's autobiography, though it is clear that Ibn Miskawayh received it as such.¹⁰⁵

The text cannot have been translated later than 1030, when Ibn Miskawayh died, but there is not enough evidence to say when it was actually translated, if this is indeed what happened. The claim that the extract in the *Tajārib al-Umam* is really a direct translation of Khusraw's autobiography is difficult to maintain. We can of course entertain the possibility of many Pahlavi books touted as autobiographies of Khusraw,¹⁰⁶ some of which may have been translated into Arabic, but nothing of the kind has survived in the original. The *Fihrist* of Ibn Nadīm mentions three books that deal with the life of Khusraw. Ibn Muqaffa' is said to have translated *The Book of the Crown, Which Treats of the Life of Anūsharwān*,¹⁰⁷ Aban al-Lāhiqī translated *The Book of the Life of Anūsharwān*,¹⁰⁸ and the so-called *Book of Kisrā to the Leaders of the People in Gratitude*¹⁰⁹ is anonymous. Grignaschi adduces only one work, something called "*The Book of Khusraw*,"¹¹⁰ but I do not find it in the *Fihrist*. In any case, these works have perished, and any attempt to link the *Sīra* with one of them is therefore pure speculation and cannot be taken as evidence for a foundation in a Sasanian source. Our confidence is boosted, however, by what seems to be a literary genre of royal biography, and the likelihood that the *Sīra* is a later forgery is lowered.

¹⁰⁵ Grignaschi 1966, p. 13: n. 21: كتبها على ما حكاه أنوشيروان نفسه في كتاب عمله

Ibid., p. 13: n. 22: قرأت فيما كتبه أنوشيروان من سيرة نفسه

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7. We know, furthermore, of one other text purporting to be a royal autobiography (that of Ardashīr), and it is not unreasonable to speculate that such documents may have replaced the earlier monumental inscriptions of the Sasanian kings, who were so eager to speak about themselves.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Nadīm 1991, p. 214: كتاب التاج في سيرة أنوشيروان

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 215: كتاب سيرة أنوشيروان

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 636: كتاب كسرى إلى زعماء الرعية في الشكر

¹¹⁰ Grignaschi 1966, p. 7: كتاب كسرى

It is indeed hard to dismiss the *Sīra* as nothing more than a post-Sasanian invention. First, apart from a single mention of the Khazars,¹¹¹ the *Sīra*, shows no acquaintance with any events after the late sixth century.¹¹² Second, many dates (given in terms of regnal years) are offered, but there are no chronological errors. Third, there are no obvious anachronisms in the religious doctrines suggested in the text, and Khusraw's statements on religion are presented in a style consistent with that of the *Dēnkart*.¹¹³ Fourth, though this work is probably not part of the *Khwadāy-Nāma* tradition,¹¹⁴ as its form is so different, its overall outlook does not differ from that of anything derived from that tradition. But we do not need to link the *Sīra* to the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition, as Grignaschi did, in order to justify our use of it. The task is unfortunately hopeless in any case. Whatever the *Sīra* is founded on, it bears little resemblance to other sources for Sasanian Iran. It is written in the first person, dates are given, and only a few of the events described in the *Sīra* are paralleled in other *Khudāy-Nāma* sources. Unless other evidence comes to light, we must infer that the *Sīra* is wholly independent of them and the tradition from which they come.

Grignaschi believed that the *Sīra*'s treatment of Khusraw's reforms were grounded in an official source. This claim was based on the observation of a series of administrative divisions, which are thought to reflect the actual organisation of the Sasanian Empire.¹¹⁵ But the sentence referring to "pays," "contrée," "canton," "village," and "homme" seems to be purely rhetorical,¹¹⁶ and contains no indication that these terms refer to real administrative areas. Whether such nomenclature represents real administrative geography is a matter of debate. But even

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹¹² It is hard to say exactly when it ends, but the latest date given is Khusraw's thirty seventh regnal year, or 568 (*Ibid.*, p. 23; p. 40: n. 68). Grignaschi affirms that the extract cannot be older than the beginning of the seventh century, because the chronicler "avait déjà oublié les revers ayant marqué la fin de ce règne" (*Ibid.*, p. 8).

¹¹³ Especially in the emphasis on justice and right conduct: see Shaked 1979, p. 180.

¹¹⁴ Grignaschi has argued quite the opposite, though he has offered no evidence (Grignaschi 1966, p. 8). The *Fihrist* clearly distinguishes between works purporting to be biographies of Khusraw and those called *Khudāy-Nāma*, and there is no suggestion that they belong to the same genre (Ibn Nadīm 1991, p. 214).

¹¹⁵ Grignaschi 1966, p. 32: n. 15.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

if we knew that these terms represented actual Sasanian administrative geography, we could not use this fact as evidence of a foundation in an official source. Would we assume, for instance, that any list of the French *régions*, *départements*, and *communes* which we happened to find could only have come from an official government document? In this case, better evidence can be adduced. The vagueness of the detail,¹¹⁷ and the heavy stress on justice, truth, and equity¹¹⁸ and the emphasis on the condition of the peasantry¹¹⁹ suggest royal propaganda. The question arises, though, whether this tendentious element was drawn from a Sasanian source, or was added to it by a Persian writer of the *Shu'ūbīya* movement.¹²⁰ Given the state of the evidence, it is difficult to decide the question, as *all* Arabic and Persian sources for Sasanian Iran seem tendentious. But if there is any input from a later writer or redactor, it probably constitutes the elaboration of a tendency that was already in his source.

The *Sīra*'s treatment of Khusraw's dealings with the Turks is richer than that of any other text. Elaborate detail, exact and credible population statistics,¹²¹ dates,¹²² and the invocation of a letter from the Turkish

¹¹⁷ The judge appointed to oversee tax collection, for example, is instructed simply "de prendre soin du peuple de sa contrée" (*Ibid.*, p. 18). When an assembly of the estates is summoned, we are informed that "trustworthy persons" (من عرفه صحته) (*Ibid.*, p. 37, n. 50) were sent thither to achieve "l'union entre les gouverneurs et les paysans, les humbles et les nobles" (*Ibid.*, p. 20), but there is no indication of what they actually accomplished. Cf. also *Ibid.*, p. 21-22.

¹¹⁸ Khusraw charges his officials "de nous rapporter toutes les affaires conformément à la vérité et à la sincérité," etc. (*Ibid.*, p. 21). The *Sīra* ends with a great emphasis on Khusraw's justice (*Ibid.*, p. 27), whose fruit "est la mise en culture de pays, grâce à laquelle les hommes, les bêtes de somme, les oiseaux et les habitants de la terre vivent" (*Ibid.*, p. 23).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19-20.

¹²⁰ The *Shu'ūbīya* movement was a development in Iranian literature occasioned by the disintegration of the caliphate between the ninth and tenth centuries of our era. The Iranian aristocracy asserted their dignity and power by reassociating themselves with Persian language and culture, especially of the pre-Islamic era (Rypka 1968, p. 115; p. 131). The glorification of the Sasanians in general, and of Khusraw in particular, would have appealed to the Persian upper classes in that age.

¹²¹ We are told for instance that the Khāqān of the Khazars had a retinue of two thousand companions who garrisoned the Caucasus (Grignaschi 1966, p. 20). Fifty thousand Turks are said to have been admitted to Iran through the Bāb Šul together with "leurs

Khāqān¹²³ all suggest an official source. It seems at first difficult to say why this document emphasised Turkish affairs at the expense of the war with New Rome from 540 to 562, which receives only slight attention. Any Sasanian king, however, must have considered warfare in the west a matter of both prestige and routine, but the very survival of Iran depended on deflecting or at least containing the nomads of Turan. The *Sīra*, perhaps unsurprisingly, portrays Khusraw as master of the Turks, whom he has integrated into the Iranian army and garrisoned in the Caucasus. The resettlement and conscription of captives in Iran is familiar from Achaemenian times, and Ṭabarī mentions that several peoples were settled in Ādharbāyjan,¹²⁴ but the *Sīra* is the only source that mentions the Turks in this connexion.

Questions about what the *Sīra* omits are fraught with problems. The text as we have it does not cover the whole of Khusraw's reign, and what Ibn Miskawayh quotes is in fact only a "fragment" of a larger work.¹²⁵ We cannot, furthermore, determine whether Ibn Miskawayh has merely presented selections of the work, which he himself edited and strung together, or has quoted the incomplete *Sīra* just as he found it. We cannot therefore make too much of the absence of any mention of Khusraw's quartering of the empire, as it was probably included in an earlier portion.

femmes, leurs fils et leurs serviteurs" (*Ibid.*, p. 24). If fifty thousand seems high, we should recall (as Grignaschi reminds us) that the Ostrogoths are said to have amounted to twenty thousand *fighters*, but the number of the Turks included warriors and their households (*Ibid.*, p. 41, n. 72). The size of the Turkish army inspected by Khusraw is, I must admit, enormous, as it is computed at fifty-three thousand men (*Ibid.*, p. 24). This is, however, significantly less absurd than Ṭabarī's assertion that Khusraw invaded the Near East with an army of ninety thousand men (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 959, l. 9).

¹²² One episode begins in Khusraw's twenty-eighth regnal year, or 559 (Grignaschi 1966, p. 20). Four Turkish tribes are said to have submitted to Khusraw at the beginning of his thirty-seventh regnal year, which Grignaschi equates with 2 July, 568 (*Ibid.*, p. 40: n. 68).

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 24-25.

¹²⁴ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 795: l. 6.

¹²⁵ The heading in the manuscript is (Ibn Miskawayh 1909, p. 187):

ذكر قطعة من سيرة أنوشروان

Grignaschi observes that the title *spāhbad* is not mentioned in connexion with a military inspection which occurred in Khusraw's twenty-eighth regnal year (559). The inspection is rather assigned to a *padgospān*, and from this fact, Grignaschi deduces that the quadripartition must have occurred after that date.¹²⁶ We may object that the assignment of the inspection to a *padgospān* and not to a *spāhbad* does not mean that the latter rank did not exist. Furthermore, it is very hard to believe that the quartering of the empire occurred after the outbreak of war with New Rome in 540, during which Iran's fighting on two fronts (the Near East and Lazica) was surely facilitated by that new development—more on this in chapter III.3. This argument must not be overemphasised, but a natural progression of thought suggests that the original, longer *Sīra* had already dealt with Khusraw's quadripartition. Much the same reasoning applies to earlier stages of Khusraw's tax reform, but I suggest in the next chapter that details of Khusraw's tax reform once belonged to the original *Sīra* also.

The *Sīra*, finally, is still unpublished in any form useful to most historians. *Tajārib al-Umam* is widely available in full only in facsimile. The manuscript itself is in many cases barely legible, and there are many spelling errors. The present investigation is therefore founded mainly on Grignaschi's translation and notes, and I have included Arabic references either when Grignaschi has reproduced the original, or when the facsimile of the manuscript was clearly legible.

REMARKS

The foregoing discussion of our three sources has been kept deliberately general. Some notion of their contents and their relationship to one another must be gained before going into deeper problems of Khusraw's reign. Preliminary reading of Dīnawarī, the *Sīra*, and Firdawsī shows that these sources are neither completely uniform in content nor identical in presentation even of similar material. It is very unlikely that these texts share all the same sources, but little more than this can be said until the whole of them has been properly analysed.

¹²⁶ Grignaschi 1966, p. 20. The authoritative discussion of the four *spāhbads* and Khusraw's quadripartition is Gyselen 2001.

However we choose to explain the similarities and differences, neglect of these sources seems uncalled for, and their quality ought to be more securely established by testing them against other sources of known value.

III. FOUR TEST CASES

Four of the most important episodes in Khusraw's reign have been selected: (1) Khusraw's first war with New Rome (540-562), (2) the revolt of Khusraw's son Nūsh Zād, (3) Khusraw's reforms, (4) the downfall of the Hephthalites. Many other incidents might have been chosen, but these episodes are significant because they represent both the domestic and foreign affairs of the Iranian state, and its interaction with three rival powers: the Romans, the Hephthalites, and the Turks. Close examination of our sources' accounts of these four episodes allows us to test their quality not in an abstract or theoretical way, but rather in the context of real history and in interaction with other sources.

III.1. THE ROMAN AND PERSIAN WAR 540-562¹²⁷

All Arabic and Persian sources offer meager treatment of the outbreak of war in 540. Ṭabarī offers only the vaguest reference to the Eternal Peace,¹²⁸ and there is no hint of the Armenian Question in any source. Khusraw's campaigns in Syria, which are presented in only vague detail, are nevertheless dwelt on with particular relish, and his destruction of Antioch and its memorable aftermath are emphasised heavily. The war in Lazica is not mentioned in any eastern source. All trace of it was omitted from the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition most likely because the war was in the end unsuccessful. Procopius and Agathias must therefore remain the best sources for the conflict in Lazica.

As far as warfare is concerned, the sources selected for this study seem to rest not on military intelligence, but rather on domestic propaganda, and perhaps even on disinformation. But our sources nevertheless contain some valuable material. Dīnawarī and Firdawsī describe in detail Khusraw's illness and the revolt of his son Nūsh Zād—two occurrences which are noticed also by Procopius. Firdawsī

¹²⁷ A Part of what follows (portions of sections II.1, II.1.a, and II.2) has appeared in an earlier form in T. Bernheimer and A. Silverstein (eds) "Eastern Sources on the Roman and Persian war in the Near East 540-545" *Late Antiquity: Eastern Perspectives*, Oxbow, Oxford, 2011. I am grateful to the chief editor, Dr Adam Silverstein, for releasing the material for its use here.

¹²⁸ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 958: ll. 11-12:

وكان فيما ذكر بين كسرى انوشروان وبين يخطيانوس ملك الروم مودعة وهدنة

contributes the names of Khusraw's generals,¹²⁹ unknown to any other source. But the most significant element of our Persian and Arabic sources concerns Sasanian *attitudes* to the war with New Rome, and the domestic portrayal of this conflict.

Sasanian propaganda clearly blamed the Roman emperor for the outbreak of war. Ṭabarī, Dīnawarī, and the *Shāhnāma* are unanimous: the Romanophil Saracens attacked Khusraw's Lakhmid vassal Mundhir.¹³⁰ The *Sīra*, without discussing Saracen affairs, ascribes the outbreak of war to Justinian's perfidy,¹³¹ and we can well infer that much the same scenario is implied. Procopius, perhaps unsurprisingly, presents exactly the opposite story: Khusraw is said to have commanded Mundhir to "assist in the invention" of a reason for breaking the truce, and a conflict over boundary lines was concocted.¹³²

Whatever the nature of the Saracen conflict may have been, it may not have been the only stimulus to war. If Procopius can be taken at face value, it seems that the Romans were trying to project power into the Caucasus and neighbouring regions in the face of considerable

¹²⁹ Before plunging us into the mire of hyperbole, Firdawsī presents with perfect credibility the names of Khusraw's commanders. Shērōy son of Bahrām, Farhād, Āshtād-Pērōz, Gurshasp, and Hurmazd son of Kharrād (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, II. 546-550) are the six Persian generals that led the invasion. Given the recent developments in Iranian sigillography, it is not impossible that the existence of these men will be confirmed, but this subject cannot be pursued here.

¹³⁰ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 958: II. 16-17:

فاغاز خالد بن جبلة على حيز المنذر فقتل من اصحابه مقتلة عظيمة و غنم اموالا من امواله

Dīnawarī 1888, p. 70: II. 3-8:

قالوا وان خالد بن جبلة الغسانی غزا النعمان بن المنذر... فقتل من اصحاب المنذر مقتلة عظيمة واشتاق اهل المنذر وخيله

In the *Shāhnāma* the complaints are put into the mouth of Mundhir, who addresses himself to Khusraw (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, II. 436-440):

اگر شاه ایران توی نگه دار و پشت دلیران توی...

چرا رومیان شهریار کنند به دشت سواران سواری کنند

اگر شاه بر تخت قیصر بود سزد گر سرافراز بی سر بود

چو دستور باشد گر انمايه شاه ببیند ز ما نیز فریاد خواه

سواران دشتی چو رومی سوار ببینند جوش نیاید به کار

¹³¹ Ibn Miskawayh 1909, p. 189: لما غدر بي قيصر و غزوته

¹³² 'Ο Χοσρόης...κοινολογησάμενος...Ἀλαμουνδάρφ ἐκέλευεν αὐτὸν ξυμπορίζεσθαι πολέμου αἰτίας. 'Ο δὲ Ἀρέθα ἐπικαλέσας ὅτι αὐτὸν περὶ γῆς ὁρίων βιάζοιτο ἐς χεῖράς τε αὐτῷ ἐν σπονδαῖς ἦλθε καὶ γῆν τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ σκίψει καταθεῖν ἤρξατο (Procopius 2006, II.i.1-3).

opposition. Complaints of the Armenians are said to have urged Khusraw to action,¹³³ and their harangue before the Persian king, which we find in Procopius, though probably an invention, may represent real grievances. Nevertheless, the passages of Procopius in question here have recently been called into doubt: Williams has argued that Procopius' account of the embassies is difficult to square with his claim that Khusraw was the unprovoked aggressor in the war of 540.¹³⁴ This raises questions about Procopius' source in this connexion, for his claims seem to justify Khusraw's invasion. Be this as it may, the Persian and Arabic consensus in our *Khudāy-Nāma* sources fits well with the Armenians' claim that Justinian had attempted to pervert the loyalty of Mundhir, and incite the Huns (presumably those in the Caucasus) to attack Iran.¹³⁵ But we hear of no other reasons in the oriental sources.

It is not difficult to imagine that Armenians, discontented with Roman rule for the reasons given by Procopius, would side with Persia. Much the same may be said for the Laz. Procopius claims that Justinian's interventions were a major source of discontent in Lazica,¹³⁶ and that the imposition of Christianity infuriated the votaries of Zoroaster, and the presence of the Roman army¹³⁷ in the wake of Gourgen's flight¹³⁸ was intolerable. Procopius also accuses two very unpopular generals, Peter and John Tzibus, whose appalling conduct eroded Lazian loyalty to Rome.¹³⁹ If any of this is true, none of it is reflected in eastern sources. In fact, very little of the Great Game that had grown up between the two powers is mentioned in Persian and Arabic sources. No attempt is made to understand the broader picture of great power relations: only the contest played out in Arabia receives attention, but even this is meager.

¹³³ Procopius 2006, II.iii.34-53.

¹³⁴ Williams 2010, p. 31-36.

¹³⁵ Procopius 2006, II.iii.47.

¹³⁶ Braund 1994, p. 290.

¹³⁷ στρατιῶται Ῥωμαίων ἐπιχωριάζειν ἤρξαντο, οἷς δὲ βάρβαροι οὗτοι ἤχθοντο (Procopius 2006, II.xv.6).

¹³⁸ Procopius 2006, I.xii.4.

¹³⁹ For the crimes of John Tzibus, see Procopius 2006, II.xv.9-11. Peter seems to have set up a monopoly that had a disastrous effect on the economy (Procopius 2006, II.xv.6; 8).

Our oriental sources allege either a letter from Mundhir to Khusraw,¹⁴⁰ or a personal interview,¹⁴¹ in which the Persian king is urged to induce Caesar to punish his refractory vassal.

Khusraw's assistance to Mundhir is emphasised because the anecdote suggests an honourable beginning to the war. This theme takes a religious turn in the *Shāhnāma*. According to Firdawsī, military action was not immediate. Instead Khusraw proceeded directly to Ādharbāyjān,¹⁴² the heartland of the Zoroastrian religion, where certain rites were performed within the fire temple there. In this connexion, it is probably significant that the fire temple in Ādharbāyjān was dedicated to Adur-Gushnāsp, the god and patron of war.¹⁴³ Firdawsī's description implies that Khusraw's prayers for victory¹⁴⁴ involved a written Avesta which was recited by a mobad.¹⁴⁵ Khusraw's attack on New Rome

¹⁴⁰ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 70: ll. 8-11:

فكتب المنذر الى انوشروان يخبره بما ارتكب منه خالد بن جبلة فكتب كسرى الى قيصر ان يأمر خالدا بقيادة المنذر
وما قتل من اصحابه ورد ما اخذ من امواله

The salient portion of Firdawsī's version of Mundhir's communication is quoted in n. 129.

¹⁴¹ In his second narrative, Ṭabarī makes Mundhir approach Khusraw and demand that he write to Justinian, so that he might punish the offending Arab, force him to return the booty taken, and pay the "wergeld" (دية) for the Arabs whom he had killed (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 959: l. 5).

¹⁴² Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, l. 522: بشد تیغ تا آذربادگان پس پشت و پیش اندر آزادگان

¹⁴³ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, p. 124.

¹⁴⁴ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, l. 530.

¹⁴⁵ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 524-526:

ز دستور پاکیزه برسم بجست دو رخ را به آب دو دیده بشست
به باژ اندر آمد به آتشکده نهادنکرسی به زر آرده
نهاده برو نامه ی زنده و است به آواز بر خواند موبد درست

The priests rend their shirts (*Ibid.*, l. 527), and grantees cast jewels and mutter praises (*Ibid.*, l. 528). Exactly when the writing and codification of the Avesta happened is a vexed question that cannot be addressed fully in the present work. Suffice it to say, though, that the *Sīra* also assumes a written Avesta in the reign of Khusraw. At one point in his reign, Khusraw was attacked by an assassin (Grignaschi 1966, p. 16-17), who was a votary of a fanatical sect possessed of "a book and a revelation" (*Ibid.*, p. 29, n. 5). If these were known to differ in some way from the orthodox revelation, and the *Sīra* implies that they were, we must infer that the Avesta had been committed to writing in or before the reign of Khusraw I (*Ibid.*). This accords with a ninth-century tradition, endorsed by Boyce, that Khusraw I ordered the writing of the

appears as something of a holy obligation, for which the blessing of Heaven was sought.

Two foreign notices seem to shed more light on Khusraw's ritual. First, we have Ammianus' claim that Shāhpūr II, according to Persian custom, took auspices before crossing the Tigris to make war on the Romans.¹⁴⁶ The ritual described in the *Shāhnāma* probably involved such auspices, and the Avesta may have been used for a kind of bibliomancy. Second, we have Procopius' notice regarding an "oracle" in Ādharbāyjān, consulted on all important matters, to which Khusraw repaired before invading the Near East.¹⁴⁷ There is no explicit statement that this was Khusraw's reason for going to Ādharbāyjān, but the suggestion is strong, and Procopius' report of the oracle would otherwise seem to have no purpose. Firdawsī seems, therefore, to have correctly reported Khusraw's location and activities in Ādharbāyjān. Finally, we might infer that Khusraw's sacrifices and prayers to the sun and other divinities, performed at Seleucia, reported by Procopius,¹⁴⁸ represent a thanksgiving after the success of the holy obligation undertaken in the temple of Ādur-Gushnāsp.

If the line of reasoning above be correct, it may shed some light on a curious passage in Firdawsī's account of the reign of Hurmazd IV. Khusraw II, says Firdawsī, gathered a large following in Ādharbāyjān before returning to Ctesiphon to take the throne. Together he and his men swore an oath to carry the *coup* against the usurper Bahrām Chobīn to the desired conclusion. Ādur-Gushnāsp is invoked, and Khusraw declares that he has no fear of the devil,¹⁴⁹ and the details suggest that the oath

Avesta (Boyce 1979, p. 135).

¹⁴⁶ The Romans were waiting, *tardante trans Tigridem rege, dum moveri permetterent sacra* (Ammianus 1986, xxi.13.2), which in the event were unfavourable (*Ibid.*, xxi.13.8).

¹⁴⁷ τὸ μέγα πυρεῖον ἐνταῦθα [*sc.* Ἀδαρβιγάνων] ἐστὶν, ὃ σέβονται Πέρσαι θεῶν μάλιστα. οὐ δὴ τὸ πῦρ ἄσβεστον φυλάσσοντες μάγοι τὰ τε ἄλλα ἐς τὸ ἀκριβὲς ἐξοσιοῦνται καὶ μαντεῖα ἐς τῶν πραγμάτων τὰ μέγιστα χρῶνται (Procopius 2006, II.xxiv.2).

¹⁴⁸ ὁ Χοσρόης ἐς Σελεύκειαν...ἦλθεν...θύσας τε τῷ ἡλίῳ καὶ οἷσις ἄλλοις ἐβούλετο, πολλὰ τε ἐπιθειάσας ὀπίσω ἀπέλαυνεν (*Ibid.*, II.xi.1).

¹⁴⁹ Khusraw II says (Huramazd 1987, ll. 1766-1768):

اگر پیش آذرگشسپ این سران بیایند و سوگند های گران
خورند و مرا یکسر ایمن کنند که پیمان من ز آن سپس نشکنند

was taken at the fire temple of Ādur-Gushnāsp. If we take Firdawsī's religious colouring seriously, it is tempting to infer that Khusraw II's business in Ādharbāyjān was much the same as that of his grandfather Khusraw I on the eve of his invasion of Roman territory.

Khusraw I's invasion of Roman territory follows the ritual. We can get a sense of the Sasanian perception of the war by noting the difference between the oriental accounts of the invasion and the narrative of Procopius. Ṭabarī and Dīnawarī are clear: in his progress towards Antioch, Khusraw *conquered* many cities and the Roman fortress at Dara.¹⁵⁰ Firdawsī goes even further, adding that cities which he names Sūrāb, Ārāyish-i-Rūm, and Qālīnīyūs were not merely plundered but levelled with the ground, and every living thing within Ārāyish-i-Rūm was destroyed.¹⁵¹ In any case these lists of cities captured or plundered are uncorroborated by Procopius' detailed treatment.¹⁵² It seems therefore that Sasanian propaganda exaggerated the subordinate status of any city or state that paid tribute to Iran. Apart from Antioch, it did not matter to the Persians which cities were involved, so long as their forced submission was emphasised. It was probably because of the tribute paid

بیشم بدین مرز با ایمنی نترسم ز پیکار آهرمنی

¹⁵⁰ Ṭabarī's first narrative notices only the taking of Antioch (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 898: ll. 5-6): ...سار نحو انطاکیة بعد سنین من ملکه وکان فیها عظماء جنود قیصر فاقتحوا.

His second narrative is fuller (*Ibid.*, p. 959: ll. 9-12):

فاخذ مدينة دارا ومدينة الرها ومدينة منبج ومدينة قنسرین ومدينة حلب ومدينة انطاکیة وكانت افضل مدينة بالشام ومدينة فامیة ومدينة حمص ومنا كثيرة متاخمة لهذه المدائن

Dīnawarī's list of conquered places omits Apamea and Hims, but is otherwise the same (Dīnawarī 1888, p. 71: ll. 12-14):

فاحتوى على مدينة دارا ومدينة الرها ومدينة قنسرین ومدينة منبج ومدينة حلب حتى انتهى الى انطاکیة فاخذها

¹⁵¹ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, l. 607: بر آن بوم و بر خاک و خاور نمائد یکی تاجور خود به لشکر نمائد

Surely this was an outrage that not even Procopius would have concealed. Firdawsī's entire treatment of this episode is found in Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 589-660. The names of the cities mentioned seem to be corruptions of Sura, Hierapolis, and Callinicum.

¹⁵² Procopius mentions that tribute was paid by Sura, though Khusraw sacked it regardless (Procopius 2006, II.v.13-27), by Sergiopolis, though payment was deferred by a year (*Ibid.*, II.v.29-33), by Hierapolis (*Ibid.*, II.vi.21-25), and by Beroea, which was also attacked savagely (*Ibid.*, II.vii.4-13). The siege of Antioch follows (*Ibid.*, II.viii-ix).

that even Rome itself was depicted as an Iranian province in the *Shāhnāma*¹⁵³—surely a piece of propaganda which Firdawsī recycled.

Khusraw's reduction of the fortress at Dara—a long-standing source of Persian annoyance—occurred towards the end of Khusraw's reign. But Dīnawarī is unambiguous in placing his event much earlier in Khusraw's reign. This must be a piece of propaganda directed not at New Rome but at Iran. Reports of Khusraw's conquest of this fortress would have increased his domestic prestige greatly, and added to the perceived glory of his reign. Unsurprisingly Khusraw's degenerate son, Hurmazd IV, is described as returning Dara to the Romans, effectively undoing one of his father's greatest achievements.¹⁵⁴ Questions about the source of this claim (whether the putative romance of Bahrām Chobīn, or the propaganda of Khusraw II) cannot be pursued here. But it will suffice here to note a point of perhaps more than minor importance. The placement of the reduction of Dara in the war of 540 can only have been written under the influence of Khusraw's later war of 572. The official Sasanian account of Khusraw's reign must therefore have been written towards the end of the sixth century or later. Agathias' excerpt from the Persian *Royal Annals* includes very little on Khusraw I's reign, and this silence would tend to support my last inference.

The issues surrounding the Roman tribute help to clarify two difficult passages in Ṭabarī. First, Ṭabarī's treatment of the war draws to a close with a statement that Justinian was forced to pay a massive sum to buy the freedom of "the rest of the towns of Syria and Egypt."¹⁵⁵ Egypt, of course, was untouched by this war, and this seeming anachronism suggested to Bosworth that the campaigns of Khusraw II, which did involve Egypt, were confounded with those of Khusraw I.¹⁵⁶ Ṭabarī, though, may have actually preserved a piece of Iranian propaganda, whereby the Roman tribute was represented as preventing Khusraw's threatened advance deeper into Roman territory. The Sasanian dynasty probably laid claim to Egypt on the grounds that it had

¹⁵³ This line appears in the context of Khusraw's quadripartition (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, l. 76): چهارم عراق آمد و بوم روم

¹⁵⁴ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 81: ll. 12-14; ll. 16-17.

¹⁵⁵ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 960: l. 3-4:

واما سائر مدن الشام ومصر فان يخطيانوس ابتاعها من كسرى باموال عظيمة حملها اليه

¹⁵⁶ Bosworth 1999, p. 255: n. 617.

belonged to the Achaemenids.¹⁵⁷ It is not, therefore, necessary to infer that a reference to Egypt is out of context in a treatment of Khusraw's first war with New Rome, and we need not infer an elementary mistake on Ṭabarī's part in order to explain its inclusion here. In any case, the rest of Ṭabarī's treatment in this connexion proves that he was not confused about which ruler and which war he was dealing with. Second, Ṭabarī's final notice¹⁵⁸ on this war, though it is not explicit, must deal with the armistice of 545, which shut down the front in the Near East, and by virtue of which the Romans agreed to an annual payment.¹⁵⁹ The same story is reported by Dīnawarī and Firdawsī.

Dīnawarī also records the fixed annual payment, but does not say how much it was, and adds that a certain Sharwīn Dastabāy and Khurrīn, his slave, were appointed not only to oversee it, but also to live with "the king of Rome."¹⁶⁰ These two men cannot be identified. Nevertheless it is hard to believe that they are totally fictional. These men must have been mentioned in Dīnawarī's source for a reason, and their names must have been recognisable to the audience at whom Dīnawarī's source was aimed. But this cannot have been the case for Dīnawarī's own audience: Dīnawarī must have retained the names for the sake of visible detail and the appearance of truth. Speculation on this matter cannot go much further.

The idea that there were Iranian overseers of the Roman tribute is not inconceivable. But if there be any truth to the claim that Sharwīn and Khurrīn lived with the Roman emperor, we might be tempted to infer some kind of permanent legation at the Roman court. If such a legation were ever established, it was not mentioned (at least to my knowledge) in any Roman sources.

Similarly doubtful is Firdawsī's notice of Caesar's embassy, led by an unidentifiable person called Mihrās,¹⁶¹ sent to bestow tribute which is

¹⁵⁷ On the Sasanians' succession to Achaemenid rule see Dignas / Winter 2007, p. 56-62.

¹⁵⁸ An agreement was reached, whereby Khusraw agreed not to attack Roman territory, and Justinian agreed to an annual payment, but no amount is specified (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 960: ll. 5-7).

¹⁵⁹ Procopius 2006, II.xxviii.3-11.

¹⁶⁰ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 71: ll. 2-6.

¹⁶¹ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, I. 714.

valued rather absurdly at ten ox-hides full of dinars.¹⁶² Such notices must be discarded in favour of Procopius' more thorough testimony, but they do give some hints that the Roman tribute was, according to Iranian perception, surrounded with an official and ceremonious aura.

III.1.a. THE TAKING OF ANTIOCH

Khusraw's taking of Antioch was a massive blow to Roman prestige, and seems to have been the highlight of the war. All sources report Khusraw's conquest in nearly the same way, though Procopius' treatment is best. There are, however, some noteworthy differences in details of the aftermath of the city's capture and the deportation of its people to a new city near Ctesiphon. Firdawsī calls Khusraw's second Antioch *Zēb-i-Khusraw*,¹⁶³ a name which sounds eerily like Dīnawarī's *Zabr-Khusrū*¹⁶⁴—another sign of a common source that was unfortunately read differently in these two cases. Ṭabarī, of course, calls it *al-Rūmiyya*,¹⁶⁵ and this (as has already been noted above) probably descends from another tradition.

All of our sources—even Procopius who calls it *Khusraw's Antioch*¹⁶⁶—report the name differently. Sebeos reports what was probably the true name of the new city, *Veh Anjatok' Khosrov*, but adds that it was also called *Shahastan-i Nok-noy*.¹⁶⁷

How can we explain these differences? It seems likely that the appellations preserved by Dīnawarī, Ṭabarī, and Firdawsī are epithets. *Zabr-Khusrū* and *Zēb-i-Khusraw* both mean something like "Khusraw's ornament," and "Roman town" (as Ṭabarī has it) is an appropriate shorthand or nickname for a Persian city populated by imported Christians. Sebeos himself was aware of two different names for this city, and others may have been in circulation.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, I. 729: پراگنده دینار ده چرم گاو نهاندند بر روم بر باژ و ساو

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, I. 681: خسرو زیب

¹⁶⁴ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 71: I. 17: زیر خسرو

¹⁶⁵ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 898: I. 9; p. 959: I. 16: الرومية

¹⁶⁶ Ἀντιόχειαν...τὴν Χοσροῦ (Procopius 2006, II.xiv.1).

¹⁶⁷ Վէի Անջատոք Խոսրով, գոր անուանեալ Շահաստան-ի Նոկ-նոյ կոչէն (Sebeos 1979, p. 69: ll. 23-24).

All narratives apart from Dīnawarī report that the captives deported to the new city were well provided for.¹⁶⁸ Unlike Ṭabarī and Dīnawarī, Firdawsī and Procopius do not mention that the New was an exact copy of the Old Antioch.¹⁶⁹ All sources apart from Procopius make the overseer of the city a Christian, though each reports his name differently. Firdawsī does not name him,¹⁷⁰ Dīnawarī calls him Yazdfanā,¹⁷¹ and Ṭabarī calls him Barāz¹⁷²—both unlikely names for a Christian. As far as Procopius is concerned, there was no overseer of New Antioch: Khusraw is said to have thought it right that the Antiochenes be called royal subjects, “that they be subject to no authorities but the king alone.”¹⁷³

Perhaps Procopius omitted the critical fact in order to avoid embarrassing Justinian, or perhaps his information was deficient and this comment is merely an extrapolation. But it is difficult to take Ṭabarī and Dīnawarī seriously. If they are correct, and there was a Christian overseer of the New Antioch, who was this man? Would Khusraw have risked importing a large community of Christians (presumably now greatly disgruntled) and put a high-ranking Persian at the head of them? Perhaps this mysterious man was, in reality, little more than what we would call a

¹⁶⁸ Khusraw provided them with a bath, an hippodrome, along with ταῖς ἄλλαις τρυφαῖς, as well as charioteers and musicians (Procopius 2006, II.xiv.1-2). The citizens were provisioned by Khusraw at the public expense (δημοσίᾳ τοὺς Ἀντιοχέας...ἐστίτευεν (B.P. I.xiv.3). Ṭabarī mentions the allocation of stipends (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 959: l. 19):

واجرى على السبي الذين نقلهم من انطاكية الى الرومية الارزاق

Firdawsī is unusually laconic (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, l. 687): ببخشيد بر هر كسى خواسته
Dīnawarī is silent.

¹⁶⁹ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 70: p. 15-17; Ṭabarī 1893, p. 898: ll. 6-9; p. 959: l. 15. There is no direct mention of this identity in the *Shāhnāma*, but there is an anecdote about a man who missed the mulberry bush that had stood outside his house before his capture. Khusraw is said to have given him a new tree (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 691-692). Procopius has nothing to say on this matter.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, l. 693: بدو داد فرمان و گنج و كلاه
يكي مرد ترسا گزين كرد شاه

¹⁷¹ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 71: l. 1: يزدفنا

¹⁷² Ṭabarī 1893, p. 960: l. 2: براز

¹⁷³ ...ὥστε τῶν ἀρχόντων οὐδενὶ ὑποχειρίους εἶναι ἢ βασιλεῖ μόνῳ (Procopius 2006, II.xiv.3).

mayor. Perhaps reports of the installation of a royalist bishop were exaggerated or misunderstood. In any case, the sources of the *Khudāy-Nāma* seem to raise, in this connexion at least, more questions than they answer.

REMARKS

The sources selected for this study were clearly not interested in a sober, blow-by-blow portrayal of the war in the Levant. Nor were they concerned with its real causes. The eastern sources are interested in effects and results, and their chief aim was to depict Iran as stronger, more aggressive, and more successful than Rome, and Khusraw as superior to Justinian. This state of affairs raises questions about Persian self-image and ideology of state. If royal prestige was tied to belligerency and the wounding of Roman pride, the taking of Antioch is surely the greatest Sasanian achievement before the conquests of Khusraw II, and it is not surprising that our sources emphasise this more than any other element of the war.

III.2. THE INSURRECTION OF NŪSH ZĀD

In the midst of war with New Rome, Khusraw and part of his army came down with the plague in 543, and retired either to Ādharbāyjān,¹⁷⁴ as Procopius suggests, or to Hims,¹⁷⁵ as Dīnawarī claims. This difference is only of minor significance, as nothing else depends upon Khusraw's location whilst ill. In any case, Procopius' placement of Khusraw further north should probably be preferred, as Ādharbāyjān was likely to have been untouched by the plague, and his testimony is contemporary to the events in question. Procopius, Dīnawarī, and the *Shāhnāma* report that whilst Khusraw was ill, his son, Nūsh Zād rebelled, and made a bid for the throne.¹⁷⁶

Procopius' testimony proves that the revolt actually happened. The *Bellum Persicum* merely introduces the revolt of Nūsh Zād,¹⁷⁷ but the full story is narrated in the *Bellum Gothicum*. Here, Khusraw's eldest son is named "Anasozadus," which clearly answers to Dīnawarī's "Anūsh Zādh" and Firdawsī's "Nūsh Zād."¹⁷⁸ He was exiled by his father, for many transgressions, chief amongst which was philandering with his father's wives.¹⁷⁹ Hearing of his father's illness, Anasozadus raised up a revolt, which Khusraw's general "Phabrizus" crushed: Anasozadus is taken captive and his eyelids are disfigured.¹⁸⁰ So runs Procopius' account.

Though we may well praise Procopius' treatment of the revolt for its apparent sobriety and accuracy, his presentation creates a strange

¹⁷⁴ Ἐτύγγανε δὲ ὁ Χοσρόης ἐξ Ἀσσυρίων ἐς χωρίον Ἀδαρβιγάνων ἦκων (Procopius 2006, II.xxiv.1). Procopius does not state explicitly that Khusraw went to Ādharbāyjān in order to recover his health, but, although the rumour of his illness is reported *after* his journey northward, it is clear that he was infected whilst in the Levant and that the disease left him whilst in Ādharbāyjān.

¹⁷⁵ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 71: ll. 7-8: مال الى مدينة حمص فاقام بها في جنوده الى ان تماثل

¹⁷⁶ This insurrection is mentioned in passing in Christensen 1944, p. 383, but the author offers no serious discussion.

¹⁷⁷ The intelligence is that Khusraw's son τυράννιδι ἐπιθέμενον ἐπαναστήναι (Procopius 2006, II.xxiv.8), and this is all that we are told in the *Bellum Persicum*.

¹⁷⁸ τῶν γὰρ οἱ παίδων ὁ πρεσβύτατος Ἀνασώζαδος ὄνομα (Procopius 2006, VIII.x.8).

¹⁷⁹ The son was punished φυγῇ, because ἄλλα τε πολλὰ τῇ ἐς τὴν δίαταν παρανομία ἐξαμαρτῶν καὶ ταῖς γυναξὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὀκνήσει οὐδεμίᾳ εὐνήν συνιών (*Ibid.*).

¹⁸⁰ Procopius 2006, VIII.x.17-22.

chronological difficulty. The *Bellum Persicum* places the revolt in the midst of Khusraw's war with New Rome in about 543,¹⁸¹ but the *Bellum Gothicum* makes it happen in about 550, the final year of the five-year truce agreed in 545.¹⁸² This discrepancy led Börm to suggest, not without some hesitation, that there were in fact two revolts.¹⁸³ But this seems to be an inadequate explanation for what has happened. The chronological problem will be addressed below, but for now it suffices to observe that Procopius makes no suggestion that he is describing two different revolts, and Dīnawarī and Firdawsī report only one.

The *Shāhnāma* offers what is by far the fullest, to say nothing of the longest, account, but Dīnawarī's much shorter treatment is almost identical to it in substance until the story's climax. It is safe to assume that the same source lies behind *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* and the *Shāhnāma*, and that Firdawsī's account represents the whole narrative.

In both sources, we are clearly dealing with a highly elaborate, and clearly tendentious, story. Some might be tempted to infer, as Nöldeke and Börm have done, that the epical quality of Nūsh Zād's insurrection was added by later authors, and that the account of his martyrdom was a poetic fantasy generated by Firdawsī.¹⁸⁴ An examination of the contents of the *Shāhnāma*'s treatment of the revolt, however, will show that Firdawsī did not invent the story's conclusion. This is not by any means to suggest that the revolt of Nūsh Zād, as narrated in *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* and the *Shāhnāma*, is as sober an account as that of Procopius. On the contrary, we are indeed faced with a decorative version of history, but the story's dramatic features were already mature and fully developed in the source used by Dīnawarī and Firdawsī. By way of inference, I suggest that the ultimate origin of the Nūsh Zād story is probably something that we might call an Iranian *Acta Martyris* constructed to recall, as though by echo, the epic cycles of prehistoric Iran.

A review of Dīnawarī's and Firdawsī's treatments suffices to show this. Khusraw's son Nūsh Zād, both Dīnawarī and Firdawsī agree, was

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, II.xxiv.1.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, VIII.xi.1.

¹⁸³ Börm 2007, p. 127.

¹⁸⁴ "Der tragische Ausgang im Šāhnāme ist durch das poetische Bedürfnis gefordert, aber natürlich unhistorisch" (Nöldeke 1879, p. 473).

born to a Christian mother, who had refused to become a Magian.¹⁸⁵ Though Dīnawarī says only that Nūsh Zād *differed* from his father in religion,¹⁸⁶ Firdawsī confirms that he was indeed a Christian.¹⁸⁷ The youth had been confined to gaol in Gundīshāpūr,¹⁸⁸ but when news of Khusraw's illness reached him, Nūsh Zād escaped, recruited an army of Christians, threw his father's deputies out of Ahwāz, and began preparations to march on Ctesiphon.¹⁸⁹ Apart from mentioning the capture of Nūsh Zād and the restoration of Khusraw's dominions,¹⁹⁰ Dīnawarī does not explain how this insurrection was dealt with. The rest of the episode is narrated only by Firdawsī.

Many were involved in Nūsh Zād's rebellion. For Firdawsī, the insurrection begins when Nūsh Zād frees the madmen imprisoned at Gundīshāpūr, and all Christians—even prelates—flock to his banner.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 71: l. 9: امه نصرانیة

Ibid., II. 10-11: كان كسرى معجبا بها وارادها على ترك النصرانية والدخول في المجوشية

Her refusal is expressed by the verb ابت (*Ibid.*, l. 11). Says Firdawsī (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, l. 748-751):

زنی داشت پرمایه شاه	به بالای سرو و به دیدار ماه...
به دین مسیحا بر آن ماه روی...	
یکی کودک آمدش خورشید چهر	ز ناهید تابنده بر سپهر
ورا نامور خواندی نوش زاد	

¹⁸⁶ Dīnawarī, p. 71: l. 12: خالف اياه في الديانة

¹⁸⁷ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, II. 753-755:

چو دوزخ بدانست و راه بهشت	عزیر و مسیح و ره زرد هشت
دو رخ را به آب مسیحا بشست	نیامد همی زند و استش درست
ز دین پدر کیش مادر گرفت	زمانه بدو مانده اندر شگفت

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, II. 756-758:

چنان تنگ دل گشت ازو شهریار	که از گل نیامد جز از خار بار
در کاج و فرخنده ایوان اوی	ببستند و کردند زندان اوی
نشستن و گهش گندشاپور بود	از ایران و از باختر دور بود

¹⁸⁹ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 71: II. 12-17.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 72: l. 18-19: اخذ ابنه انوش زاد اسيرا وانتهى فيه الى ما امر به

¹⁹¹ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, II. 784-788:

کسی کو ز بند خرد جسته بود	به زندان نوشین روان بسته بود
ز زندان ها بند ها بر گرفت	همه شهر ازو دست بر سر گرفت
به شهر اندرون هرک ترسا بدند	اگر جاتلیق ار سکویا بدند
بسی انجمن کرد بر خویشتن	سواران گردنکش تیغ زن
فراز آمدندش تنی سی هزار	همه نیزه دار از کارزار

Some of the nobility were also involved—such, at least, is implied by Khusraw's command to kill the implicated nobles.¹⁹²

The dissidents may well have been very numerous, but it is difficult to believe that Nūsh Zād's army numbered thirty thousand men: this may be an error for three thousand, which we find as a variant.

A line that Khāleghī-Motlagh deleted on no easily discernible grounds makes Nūsh Zād's mother the financier of the coup.¹⁹³ This claim is curiously reminiscent of Procopius' report, mentioned above, that Nūsh Zād had taken to bed some of Khusraw's wives. A rebellious alliance between mother and son might well have provided grounds for such slander.

News of the insurrection reaches Khusraw, who then writes a doleful letter to his lieutenant at Ctesiphon, Rām Barzīn,¹⁹⁴ whose name Procopius seems to have distorted. Much of this is familiar from Dīnawarī's account. Khusraw expresses his rage,¹⁹⁵ and expounds a rather dim view of Christians,¹⁹⁶ who are said to be cowardly, but there is nothing about "turning the other cheek" as in Dīnawarī.¹⁹⁷ Khusraw's suspicion that his son had formed an alliance with the Roman emperor, unique to Firdawsī,¹⁹⁸ is not true, despite representing a realistic fear. The king urges his lieutenant not to kill Nūsh Zād, who is rather to be

¹⁹² Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, II. 872-874. This command is also found in Dīnawarī; likewise the notion that any one that curses Nūsh Zād curses Khusraw also (*Ibid.*, II. 878-879).

¹⁹³ This line appears among Khāleghī-Motlagh's notes (p. 149: n. 7):

بسی داد مادر ورا خواسته که از شاه بد گنجش آراسته

¹⁹⁴ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, II. 793-800.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, I. 817:

و دیگر که از مرگ شاهان داد نگیرد کسی یاد جز بدنژاد

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, I. 822:

چنین بود خود در خود کیش اوی سزاوار جان بد اندیش اوی

Ibid., I. 823: کیش فرزند ما پاک نیست

Ibid., I. 862-863:

چنین ست کیش مسیحا که دم زنی تیز و گردد کسی زو دژم
نه پروای رای مسیحا بود به فرجام خصمش چلیپا بود

¹⁹⁷ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 72: II. 7-8:

كيف تبقى النصارى وفي دينهم ان الرجل منهم ان لطم خذه الايسر امكن من الايمن

¹⁹⁸ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, I. 836-837:

و زان نامه کز قیصر آمد به روی همی آب تیره در آمد به جوی
از آن کوهم آواز و هم کیش اوست گمانند قیصر به تن خویش اوست.

captured,¹⁹⁹ and held in the palace and treated with respect and generosity, but the nobles that follow Nūsh Zād, as we have already observed, are to be put to death.²⁰⁰ The end of the story, found only in Firdawsī, involves a battle between the armies of Nūsh Zād and Rām Barzīn, and the rebel dies the death of a Christian martyr, and is buried accordingly.

Apart from Nūsh Zād's martyrdom, which seems rather fanciful, the details rehearsed above are not in themselves unbelievable, nor do they actually contradict Procopius' account. Procopius, however, neglects to mention that Nūsh Zād was a Christian. But Procopius is not the only author to have omitted elements of the story. Dīnawarī ends his account abruptly, after Khusraw's letter is quoted. Neither Ṭabarī nor the *Sīra* include a mention of the story at all. In short, every source apart from the *Shāhnāma* lacks important details or omits the story altogether. Why is this the case? Why is the coverage of this revolt so uneven, especially in Dīnawarī and Firdawsī, whose accounts are obviously grounded in the same source?

Speculation on whether the original *Sīra* included the revolt of Nūsh Zād may well be pointless. But in a curious passage Khusraw demands that his relatives and courtesans respect his religion,²⁰¹ as though alluding to earlier trouble, and we may be tempted to link this with the insurrection of his son.

As for our other texts, we can venture more secure inferences. The silence and confusion of Procopius are perhaps easiest to explain. Reports of the revolt came to Procopius from the highest levels of the Armenian church and from a Christian advisor to Khusraw, and this by a somewhat circuitous route.²⁰² It seems fair to infer that the Christianity of Nūsh Zād was the reason why these officials, and Christian officials at

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, I. 843:

بگرفتنش بهتر ز کشتن بود مگرش از گنه باز گشتن بود

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, II. 872-874.

²⁰¹ "Il est naturel que les parents du roi et ses courtisans soient puissants et forts. Mais si le souverain néglige de les contrôler, ceux qui ont le droit de lui adresser la parole deviennent avides, à l'exception de ceux qui suivent l'«adab» de leur roi, qui respectent sa religion" etc. (Grignaschi 1966, p. 22).

²⁰² Procopius claims that his information on Khusraw's illness and Nūsh Zād's rebellion was communicated to the Armenian general Valerian by a secret envoy who heard the story from the brother of the Bishop of Dvin (Procopius 2006, II.xxiv.8).

that, transmitted the rumours. Nūsh Zād's faith, we should infer, is not an invention or inference of a later time which was woven into the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition. It is difficult to imagine why this detail would have been made up, but it is not hard to see why Procopius would have concealed it. If Justinian had heard of the insurrection, he took no action, and this must have proved an embarrassment; but if word of the rebellion had not reached him, to be informed of it too late would have infuriated the emperor. Procopius had good reason to reduce the story, in his *Bellum Persicum* at least, to the bare facts and minimise the detail that was likely to give offence.

The situation is different in Procopius' *Bellum Gothicum*, where the revolt is given fuller treatment. The story reached him, once again, from a Christian: this time Khusraw's physician Tribunus,²⁰³ and this fact also allows us the inference that Nūsh Zād's Christianity was the point of interest. Nevertheless, the faith of Nūsh Zād is still missing.

We have already noted that the story has also been dislodged from its proper context and moved seven years later. Furthermore, the book in which we find this longer treatment is the eighth in Procopius' *History*, separated from the first mention of Nūsh Zād's revolt by five volumes. This temporal and spatial displacement may have been the result of sheer carelessness, occasioned by the arrival of new and perhaps startling information long after Procopius had written his treatment of the war in the Levant. But this is unlikely: Procopius must have known the full story from the beginning, and his delay in reporting the revolt signifies a hesitance to reveal sensitive information.

The chronological error is deliberate. Procopius moved the revolt to 550, when it would have been impossible for Justinian to take advantage of it: the Goths had taken Rome, Italy demanded intense military action, and warfare raged in Lazica. Roman support for a Persian coup would have been impossible at this time.

Ṭabarī omitted the revolt not because he chose to excise it, but rather because his sources did not include it. This can be inferred from comparison with the two sources whose accounts of Sasanian history are most similar to Ṭabarī's, Eutychius and Ibn Qutayba, who also omit the revolt.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ This physician was sent to Khusraw by Justinian (*Ibid.*, VIII.10-16).

²⁰⁴ Ibn Qutayba 1960; Eutychius 1985.

The story of Nūsh Zād must therefore come from another source, one preoccupied with Christian affairs, probably composed in Syriac (the *lingua franca* of Iranian Christians), and only written into the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition²⁰⁵ by way of an Arabic translation. The story may well have been imbedded in Dīnawārī's main source of Sasanian history. Or he may have found it elsewhere and written it into the narrative himself. A parallel to the latter case would be Dīnawārī's use of the romance of Bahrām Chobīn, as he seems to have been the first author to incorporate material from this text into the broader narrative of Sasanian history.²⁰⁶

How can the inferences listed above be justified? The episode would not have been interesting to Zoroastrians: it is full of Christian imagery, the narrator is sympathetic to Nūsh Zād, who dies a martyr for the Christian faith, and Syrian ecclesiastical vocabulary abounds.²⁰⁷ But the most convincing evidence that the source was Syrian is the emphasis on Christian burial. Inhumation was deeply offensive to Persian sensibilities,²⁰⁸ and was attacked in the persecutions under Bahrām V, whose chief Mobad ordered the disinterment of all buried Christians.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ This source found its way into both *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* and the *Shāhnāma*, but, as we have seen, Dīnawārī does not narrate the entire episode. The same incomplete narrative, nearly identical to that of Dīnawārī, is found also in *Nihāyat al-Irāb* (Browne 1900, p. 231).

²⁰⁶ Ibn Qutayba, Dīnawārī's contemporary, omitted the romance of Bahrām Chobīn from his exposition of Iranian history (Ibn Qutayba 1960).

²⁰⁷ Syrian ecclesiastical terms appearing in this episode are given in Arabic transliteration: *jāthalīq* (catholicos) and *biṭrīq* (patriarch) (همه جاثلیق و بطریق روم, Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, 1. 895), and *suquf* (سقف, *Ibid.*, 1. 963). These are clearly Arabicised forms of the Syriac *qathulīqā* (or *qathlīqā*), *pātaryarqā*, and *afesqūfā*, recognisable by the change of the Syriac *q* and *p* to *j* and *b*, and so forth, in Arabic. *Sukūbā* (bishop) (سکوبا, *Ibid.*, 1. 957) seems to be derived from *afesqūfā* also. However, the fact that these terms have been arabicised suggests that the source had not been translated into Pahlavi—an observation which would militate against Nöldeke's claim that Firdawsī used no Arabic sources (Nöldeke 1879, p. xxiii).

²⁰⁸ Procopius reports that one of the charges against Seoses, a high-ranking Persian at whose execution Kavād connived, was τὴν γύνακα θάψαι, though γῆν κρύπτειν ποτὲ τὰ τῶν νεκρῶν σώματα was forbidden (Procopius 2006, I.xi.35). Agathias claims that the Persians strictly forbade the use of tombs or coffins, and even covering the dead with earth was for them ἡκιστὰ θέμις (Agathias 1967, B.23.1).

²⁰⁹ The order was given by Mihr-Shabūr, the chief Mobad (Bedjan 1894, p. 254):
 موباد شاه پسران را که در گورستان دفن شده بودند، امر کرد که از گورستان خارج کنند و در آتش بسوزانند.

Burial and the rites associated with it must, therefore, have been something of a cultural shibboleth for Iranian Christians. Nūsh Zād, accordingly, when on the point of death, specifically eschews the *dakhma*, the aromatic balms, and all other trappings of a Zoroastrian funeral, and requests Christian rites.²¹⁰ It is hard to imagine that such a story was composed by a Zoroastrian, and a Christian, probably Nestorian, Syriac origin seems a reasonable inference.

That the earliest recension of this putative Syrian source omitted the conclusion of Nūsh Zād's revolt appears unlikely. Dīnawarī seems to have had a taste for the dramatic, and it is very surprising that the most entertaining part of Nūsh Zād's revolt is not in his history. Why, we may ask, did Dīnawarī remove the conclusion? To answer this question we should compare Dīnawarī's account with that of Firdawsī. If we assume that the source used by these two authors was substantially the same, it seems fair that the end of the story as Dīnawarī found it was exactly, or almost exactly, as we find it in the *Shāhnāma*.

Certain details of the conclusion to the Nūsh Zād rebellion would have raised obvious danger-flags for Dīnawarī. The anti-Christian speech which Firdawsī puts into the mouth of one of Rām Barzīn's warriors is an inflammatory attack not on the Christian religion, but rather on Christ himself.²¹¹ The speech is redolent of Zoroastrian anti-Christian invective, such as we find reported in Armenian sources,²¹² and we need not doubt

This persecution is discussed in Brock 1976, p. 9: n. 37.

²¹⁰ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, II. 951-952:

مکن دخمه و تخت و رنج دراز به رسم مسیحا یکی گور ساز
نه کافور باید نه مشک و عنبر...

Ibid., I. 953:

بگفت این و لب را به هم بر نهاد شد آن شاد دل نامور نوش زاد

²¹¹ An old man calls out to Nūsh Zād, and amongst many threats and boasts utters what is surely an orthodox Zoroastrian attack on Christianity (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, II. 908-910):

مسیح فریبده خود کشته شد چن از دین یزدان سرش کشته شد
ز دین آوران دین آنکس مجوی کجا خود را ندانست روی
اگر فر یزدان برو تافتی جهود اندرو راه کی یافتی

The whole battle is narrated in *Ibid.*, II. 888-980. Nūsh Zād responds to the "doting airhead," (ای پیر فرتوت سر ز باد) but to no avail (*Ibid.*, I. 927).

²¹² The letter of Mihrnerseh, who is called "Վզուրկ հրաւստար Էրան եւ Անէրան," addressed to "Greater Armenia," quoted in Eliše's *History* (Eliše 1993, p. 24-27),

its authenticity. Iranian Christians would have been familiar with such rhetoric. But this speech, and especially its implication that Christ was crucified by the Jews, must have struck a Muslim audience as an extraordinary and outrageous blasphemy.²¹³ The public and maudlin display of grief when Nūsh Zād's body is returned to his mother²¹⁴ must have seemed no better than idolatry. The *Shāhnāma*, finally, clearly depicts Nūsh Zād as a Christian martyr²¹⁵—another offence to Muslim sensibilities. It seems unlikely that Firdawsī would have supplied any of these features himself.

proves that the Zoroastrian hatred of Christianity was organised by the highest orders of church and government, and lists several theological grievances, and the mere humanity of Christ is strongly asserted. The torture, crucifixion, death, and burial of Christ are said by Eliše to have infuriated Yazdgard II (*Ibid.*, p. 12: l. 20 - p. 13: ll. 1-2), presumably because these indignities were unfit for one who was believed to be a god. The letter of Khusraw II to Heraclius, quoted in Sebeos, is accordingly explicit in ascribing imposture to Christ, who died an ignominious death at the hands of the Jews: "զի Քրիստոսն այն, որ զսկսն իւր ոչ կարաց ասրեցուցանել ի Հրէիցն, այլ սպանին կախեալ զփայտէ," etc. (Sebeos 1979, p. 123: ll. 30-31).

²¹³ The Quran, of course, denies that the Jews crucified Jesus (ما قتلوه وما صلبوه), and stresses that "God took him up to himself" (بل رفعه الله اليه) (Quran, 4:157-158).

²¹⁴ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, II. 965-973:

مسیحی به شهر اندرون هرک بود نمائد ایچ ترسا دو رخ ناشخود
خروش آمد از شهر و از مرد و زن که بودند، یکسر شدند انجمن
تن شهریار دلیر و جوان دل و دیده ی شاه نوشین روان
به تابوتش از جای بر داشتند سه فرسنگ بر دست بگذاشت
چن آگاه شد زان سخن مادرش به خاک اندر آمد سر و افسرش
ز پرده برهنه بیامد به راه برو انجمن گشته بازارگاه
سرآبرده یی گردش اندر زدند جهانی همه خاک بر سر زدند
به خاکش سپردند و شد نوش زاد ز باد آمد و ناگهان شد به باد
همه گندشاپور گریان شدند ز درد دل شاه بریان شدند

²¹⁵ The prince is mortally wounded by a stray arrow (*Ibid.*, I. 940), and on the point of death, Nūsh Zād calls for a bishop to whom he confesses his sins (*Ibid.*, I. 943). He repents of the trouble he has wrought, and asks for a horseman to be sent to his mother to announce his death (*Ibid.*, II. 944-946). Nūsh Zād is then found dead, his head in the embrace of a "Roman bishop" (*Ibid.*, I. 957). Rām Barzīn comes upon this pathetic scene, and asks of the bishop Nūsh Zād's final wishes, which are then communicated faithfully. The bishop then compares Nūsh Zād to Christ (*Ibid.*, II. 963-964):

به رسم مسیحا کنون مادرش کفن سازد و گور و هم چادرش
کنون جان او با مسیحا یکی ست همان ست کین کشته بر دار نیست

Firdawsī's task was to glorify the reigns of the kings of Iran for the entertainment of the nobility at the Ghaznavid court, and he achieved this by versifying his sources faithfully without major expurgation. If Dīnawarī's readers were clerics and theologians, they would have looked with suspicion on a text too heavily laden with pre-Islamic tales cherished by a subjugated but still active religious minority. The insults to Christ would also have been problematic for such an audience. If Dīnawarī's readers were, as may be more likely, literary men and bureaucrats, who wished to be edified by tales of the pre-Islamic heyday of Iran, the full story of Nūsh Zād's rebellion would have amounted to a long, pointless, and potentially awkward, digression.

The revolt of Nūsh Zād dominates Firdawsī's account of Khusraw's first Roman war. The story is strangely reminiscent of what is perhaps the finest portion of the *Shāhnāma*, the story of Suhrāb and Rustam, in which father and son do battle and the son is slain. Could this parallel be the reason why the martyrdom of Nūsh Zād became blended with Sasanian royal history in the first place?

The epic martyrdom of Nūsh Zād, a Christian martyr of royal blood, must also have filled the Christians of Iran with hope that a follower of Christ might one day sit upon the throne of Cyrus and Ardashīr. The story, in any case, seems to have been part of a constellation of Christian apocrypha. We can adduce, for instance, the rumour, diffused throughout the Christian Orient, and reported by Sebeos, that Khusraw himself had both converted to Christianity at the end of his life, and been given Christian burial.²¹⁶

Also relevant are two of Dīnawarī's notices pertaining to Christianity in *al-Akhhār al-Ṭiwāl*. First, we have a reference to the visit of a Christian apostle to Ardashīr I, and his interaction with the vizier Abarsām.²¹⁷ Second, we have the a small digression added to the story of Bahrām Chobīn's rebellion in the reign of Hurmazd IV. The cry of the

²¹⁶ "Էւ ի ժամ վախճանին ծագեալ փայլակնացեալ գնովաւ լոյս աստուածային Բանին" (Sebeos 1979, p. 69: ll. 26-27), and Khusraw then makes a profession of his faith (*Ibid.*, ll. 27-31), and is baptised by the Catholicos of Iran ("Էրան կաթողիկոս") (*Ibid.*, p. 70: l. 2). A few days before his death, "հաղորդեցաւ կենդանաբար մարմնոյ և արեանն Տեառն" (*Ibid.*, ll. 4-5). Finally, when Khusraw died, "բարձեալ զմարմին նորա քրիստոնէիցն տարեալ էդին ի շիրիմս թագաւորացն" (*Ibid.*, ll. 8-9).

²¹⁷ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 46: l. 18 - p. 47: l. 3.

rebels was "Hurmazd is not king; Yazdān Jushnas is not vizier!"²¹⁸ — which Dīnawarī justifies with a surprising explanation. He links the phrase to a revolt against Ardashīr I provoked by that king's conversion to Christianity.²¹⁹ Ardashīr's vizier, who is called Yazdān here, is supposed to have converted also, for both he and the king had been won over by one of Christ's apostles.

The two stories just rehearsed are clearly related. But in the earlier story, Ardashīr's vizier is called Abarsām, not Yazdān. The difference suggests that Dīnawarī *did not* make up the second anecdote himself, but rather copied it as he found it, retaining the aberrant name. The difference of names is probably also a sign that the two 'versions' of the story (if that is the right word) do not, ultimately, come from the same place. If they were initially found in the same document, it is hard to imagine why they were not made congruent at some stage.

What can we infer from this? First, at least two different versions of an apocryphal visit of a Christian apostle were in circulation. Second, Dīnawarī had before him a much longer story, whose conclusion he merely hints at: the conversion of Ardashīr and his vizier to Christianity provoked a revolt. In this earlier revolt the rallying cry was "Ardashīr is not king, Yazdān is not vizier!"

The story is of course apocryphal, and its Christian character hardly needs emphasis. Dīnawarī's inclusion of these stories must tell us something about him and the sources which he used. Pourshariati is surely right in observing that the story of the apostle and Ardashīr I "throws an interesting light on the potential importance that Dīnawarī assigned to what seems to have been a substantial Christian community of Dīnawar."²²⁰ Was it this community that brought the story of Nūsh Zād to Dīnawarī's attention? If so, this might offer an alternative explanation for the removal of the attack on the Christian religion which we find in Firdawsī. Were the story of Nūsh Zād and the anecdotes about Ardashīr I found in the same text? How much apocryphal Christian literature pertaining to Sasanian royal history existed? How much of this

²¹⁸ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 85: ll. 16-17.

²¹⁹ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 85: ll. 17-20:

وكانت قصة اولي خوارجهم ان اردشير بابكان كان صار اليه بعض الحواريين فاستجاب له ودخل في دين المسيح صلى الله عليه وكان في عصره وشايحه الى ذلك وزيره يزدان فغضب العجم لذلك وهموا بخلع اردشير حتى اظهر لهم الرجوع عما هم به.

²²⁰ Pourshariati 2010, p. 207.

literature was Dīnawarī aware of, but left out of his history? These and other questions may never be answered, but may nevertheless stimulate further investigation.

REMARKS

In reality the insurrection of Nūsh Zād must have been simply another attempted *coup* by the king's son at a weak point in his reign. But this *coup* was perceived differently because the pretender was Christian. This is why the story was transformed into a romance. If my inference of a Syriac origin for this romance is correct, a heretofore unknown strain has been revealed within the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition. Future research, it is to be hoped, will put my claim to the test, and perhaps reveal within *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* further evidence of the Syrian source, perhaps an epic or *Acta Martyris*, which I have inferred.

III.3. KHUSRAW'S REFORMS

Khusraw I's reforms of the Iranian state have been considered a high point in that king's reign, when Iran recovered from the convulsions of the Mazdakite uprising, and when the monarchy became more centralised than ever before. The Iranian state, it has been argued, also abandoned payment of taxes in kind for payment in specie, and established for the first time in its history a standing army.²²¹ Such claims are all doubtful, albeit to varying degrees, as almost nothing is known about the state of Iranian finances and military affairs *before* the reform was executed. In fact the only discussion of the previous state of things available to us is embedded in the treatments of Khusraw's reforms, and this makes inferences very difficult. Discussion of the tax reform, for instance, does not allow us to decide whether a market or a planned economy prevailed in Iran, nor do we read of anything but a land tax and a poll tax. But there must have been others: customs duties, for instance, surely existed. The life of the court, with its banquets, hunts, and other expensive diversions, must have required a great deal of money, but our sources do not discuss this. They speak only of the importance of funding the military.

Despite the deficiencies of our sources, it is easy to make too much of Khusraw's innovations, and the financial reforms have received more attention, it seems, than any other aspect of his reign apart from the subdual of the Mazdakites. This is chiefly because the revised taxation system was adopted by the caliphate,²²² because it bears some superficial similarity to the financial innovations of Diocletian, as expounded by Altheim and Stiehl,²²³ and because it is reminiscent of certain developments in Syria in the fifth century.²²⁴ The importance of the tax reform is, nevertheless, usually exaggerated,²²⁵ and this chapter makes no

²²¹ See, for instance, Rubin 2000, p. 655.

²²² Morony 1982, *passim*.

²²³ Comparison is made to the *indictio* and *jugatio* (Altheim / Stiehl 1957, p. 41), but this ingenuity has not attracted many adherents (Howard-Johnston 1995, p. 215, n. 127).

²²⁴ Gariboldi 2006, p. 195.

²²⁵ Perhaps the wildest exaggeration is that of Crone, who makes the reform the *cause*, and not the result, of the Mazdakite uprising (Crone 1991, p. 34). But we should prefer the sounder judgement of Howard-Johnston: "The reforms should...be seen as an important episode in the domestic history of the Sasanian empire, but not as

attempt to plead for its importance. Instead, it shall outline the relationship between Khusraw's overhaul of that system and his other reforms.

Analysis of Khusraw's innovations is made more difficult by the absence of foreign sources. The contemporary testimonies of Procopius and Agathias do not mention any project of reform. We have, therefore, no external controls on what the Persian and Arabic sources say. Ṭabarī's account tends to be the foundation of modern treatments of Khusraw's reforms,²²⁶ but Rubin has successfully demonstrated the importance and utility of other sources, chief amongst which he ranks the *Shāhnāma*.²²⁷

It is strange, though, that only Ṭabarī's second narrative mentions those innovations.²²⁸ This was a problem for Nöldeke: the assumed superiority of Ṭabarī's first narrative cannot be squared with its omission of Khusraw's reforms—an omission paralleled, incidentally, by two other authors within the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition: Eutychius and Ibn Qutayba.²²⁹ However we choose to explain this—whether by positing two different recensions of Ibn Muqaffa's *Khudāy-Nāma*, or by insisting that all accounts of the reforms, apart from the *Sīra*, are grounded in a forgery which Grignaschi calls Ps. Ibn Muqaffa',²³⁰ or by some other more realistic theory—the general congruence of Dīnawarī and the *Shāhnāma* suggests that the omission from Ṭabarī's first narrative is probably insignificant as far as the general picture of the reform is concerned.

Nevertheless, an important question must be asked: in what source *did* the discussion of Khusraw's reforms originate? Our sources' synoptic view inspires confidence in the quality of the data, and suggests a common origin. Rubin found this congruence all the more impressive, because he believed that the accounts in question were probably *not*

entailing a fundamental restructuring of the fiscal or governmental system" (Howard-Johnston 1995, p. 215).

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

²²⁷ Rubin 1995, *passim*.

²²⁸ Ṭabarī's first narrative, though, together with Eutychius and Ibn Qutayba, who also omit Khusraw's reforms (Ibn Qutayba; Eutychius 1985), has been traditionally linked to Ibn Muqaffa's *Khudāy-Nāma*. This omission led to Rubin's conjecture that Ṭabarī's first narrative (and the sources related to it) were founded on "an epitomized version" of Ibn Muqaffa's work (*Ibid.*, p. 254; p. 265).

²²⁹ Ibn Qutayba 1960; Eutychius 1985.

²³⁰ Grignaschi 1971, p. 119.

grounded in the same material.²³¹ But this seems to be exactly what our sources do not imply: the differences among Dīnawarī, Ṭabarī, and Firdawsī, are not really significant, as we shall see, and can be explained by divergent interpretations of the same source and by compression of its data by Dīnawarī and Firdawsī. Further clues come from the common silence of Ṭabarī's first narrative, Eutychius, and Ibn Qutayba. Deliberate exclusion of the reforms seems unlikely, especially since Ṭabarī's second narrative includes them, and we might rather infer that treatment of the tax reform originated outside the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition. This would explain why the discussion of the reforms in Ṭabarī, Dīnawarī and the *Shāhnāma* is so different from the rest of the text surrounding it: it is the only financial element within the entire *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition, and the level of detail is not congruous with the rest of Ṭabarī, Dīnawarī, and Firdawsī. Might the tax reform, perhaps together with a discussion of Khusraw's quadripartition of the empire, have originated in the original, longer redaction of the *Sīra*? If there is an official source behind this text, as seems likely, it is hard to believe that these reforms were not included in it.

One noteworthy similarity between Ṭabarī's narrative of the reforms and the *Sīra* can be adduced to build the case for the conjecture advanced above. The *Sīra*'s frequent use of direct speech and the first person has already been noted as a distinctive feature of that text. Ṭabarī who usually couches his narrative in the third person, begins his discussion of the reform with uncharacteristic direct speech by Khusraw.²³² Furthermore, the reasons for executing the reforms, given in the same speech, invoke "our frontiers," "our border," and ensuring that "we have money stored up in our treasuries," and so forth.²³³ The presentation and style of this speech seem out of step with the rest of Ṭabarī, but they are consistent with the *Sīra*. The speech and the details of the tax reform must have come from the same text, which, as I suggest, was the original, longer *Sīra*: Ṭabarī, or perhaps his source, condensed the details but left the speech untouched.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 254; p. 254-266.

²³² Ṭabarī 1893, p. 960: l. 18: انا قد راينا، الخ.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 961: ll. 1-4:

ونأمر بانجامها في السنة في ثلاثة انجم وتجمع في بيوت اموالنا من اموال ما لو اتانا عن ثغر من ثغورنا او طرف من اطرافنا فتق او شيء نكرهه واحتجنا الى تداركه او حسمه ببذلنا فيه مالا كانت الاموال عندنا معدة موجودة

Given the state of the evidence, the link between the *Sīra* and Ṭabarī's treatment of Khusraw's reforms seems as good as any other possible inference, but it is impossible to prove. Nor is it easy to explain why the full *Sīra* is nowhere attested. But further speculation may be fruitful in any case: if the earlier half of the *Sīra* was already reflected in the source that underlies all accounts of the tax reform, this might explain why Ibn Miskawayh excerpted only the later portions, which dealt not with the initial implementation of the reforms, but with the curbing of abuse. In any case, this suggestion is at least more plausible than Grignaschi's claim that *all* accounts of Khusraw's reforms—save that of the *Sīra*—are forgeries.

III.3.a. THE POLL AND LAND TAXES²³⁴

First the capitation or poll tax, as this is the simplest element of the fiscal reform. There is only the slightest hint of this tax in the *Sīra*²³⁵ and the *Shāhnāma* only mentions it in passing without comment or emphasis.²³⁶ Dīnawarī and Ṭabarī both mention it, but the latter's discussion is slightly fuller.²³⁷ Dīnawarī notes that this tax, called the *jizya*, was levied on four classes, and the nobility, marzbāns, knights, scribes, and any one in the service of the king were exempted: no one, he continues, was compelled to pay if he had not attained twenty years, or if he had passed fifty. Ṭabarī's details are the same, but he adds that this tax had previously been a fixed sum,²³⁸ and that the new tax was set at twelve, eight, six, and four dirhams, in accordance with status.²³⁹ Though this tax may well have been fair, as it was probably proportional to wealth, its payment amounted to an acknowledgement of inferiority, and this new method of taxation was probably meant to reinforce the Iranian class system, which the Mazdakite disorders had disturbed but not destroyed.²⁴⁰

²³⁴ The evidence for these taxes is found in Ṭabarī 1893, p. 960: l. 7 - p. 963: l. 14; Dīnawarī 1888, p. 72: l. 19-p. 73: l. 16; Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 70ff.

²³⁵ Grignaschi 1966, p. 20.

²³⁶ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, l. 87: گزیتی نهادند بر يك درم

²³⁷ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 73: 2-5; Ṭabarī 1893, p. 963: ll. 9-14.

²³⁸ The *jizya* was originally (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 960: l. 10): شيئاً معلوماً

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 963: ll. 11-12: اثني عشر درهما وثمانية وستة واربعة كقدر اكثر الرجل واقلاله

²⁴⁰ Gariboldi 2006, p. 162. The Iranian noble houses were by no means eradicated by the Mazdakite upheaval. Sasanian seals show that "the great families continued to play a predominant role during the late Sasanian period, one which they were still playing when the Arabs arrived," etc. (Gyselen 2008, p. 109). Some of Khusraw's reforms point to the same thing. Khusraw resolved to take into his own care "children whose wards had died" (عيال ذوى الحساب الذين مات قيمهم) (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 897: ll. 11-12). Ṭabarī also claims that women of noble houses (من بيوتات الاشراف) were married to husbands (اكاهن) "equal to themselves" (*Ibid.*, p. 897: l. 13.). If noble children lingered, and men were found equal in status to noble women, we must believe that the class system, though perhaps disrupted, was not obliterated.

Apart from objections raised by Grignaschi,²⁴¹ the details of the land tax are not disputed, and Dīnawarī, Ṭabarī, and Firdawsī offer basically the same description.²⁴² Taxes which had formerly been paid in kind, were to be paid in money. Each *jarīb* of land planted with trefoil and clover was taxed at seven dirhams, every four Persian date palms per *jarīb* were taxed at one dirham, and the same amount was levied on every six foreign date palms, and on every six olive trees, per *jarīb*. Dīnawarī adds the important point that taxation also varied with the degree of cultivation and proximity to cities. The *reasons* for this reform are less clear, and require further discussion.

But before addressing ourselves to questions regarding the purpose of the reforms, let us eliminate what they were probably *not* meant to achieve.

First, Khusraw's innovations seem to have had nothing to do with the redevelopment or encouragement of agriculture.²⁴³ Firdawsī alleges a

²⁴¹ The synoptic view of Ṭabarī, Dīnawarī, and the *Shāhnāma* appears to be challenged by the *Sīra*. Grignaschi believed that this text's portrait of Khusraw's fiscal reform contradicted that of the Arabic historians and Firdawsī. His conclusion is grounded in an analysis of the terminology in the *Sīra*: the new land tax is called *muqāta'a*, which implies a fixed rate tax on land, irrespective of what is grown on it (Grignaschi 1971, p. 97). The word *muqāta'a*, however, is paired with *ta'dīl*, and the phrase *al-ta'dīl wa 'l-muqāta'a* (التعديل والمقاطعة): see Grignaschi's transcription of the relevant parts of the *Sīra* in Appendix A in Grignaschi 1971, p. 132), as Grignaschi points out, admits of two meanings. One possible construal is "to apportion the taxes with justice and establish a fixed levy" ("ripartire con giustizia i tributi e stabilire un canone fisso" (Grignaschi 1971, p. 95)); another is "to determine the taxes and establish a fixed levy" ("determinare i tributi e stabilire un canone fisso" (*Ibid.*, p. 96)). There may be no reason to assume that this Arabic phrase implies anything specific (Rubin 1995, p. 267), but while Grignaschi rightly admits that the first construal is compatible with Ṭabarī, Dīnawarī and Firdawsī, he nevertheless rejects it, on the grounds that the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition was corrupted by learned Persians of the *shu'ūbiya* movement ("i dotti persiani della su'ubiya") (Grignaschi 1971, p. 119). Grignaschi's dismissal of the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition quite obviously begs the question, as Rubin points out, but it also does nothing to boost the credibility of the *Sīra*. As Rubin suggests, *Al-ta'dīl wa 'l-muqāta'a* is probably a rendering of a difficult Pahlavi term (Rubin 1995, p. 278), and its meaning does indeed require explanation, but Grignaschi's insistence on an aberrant interpretation is not convincing. We should prefer to construe this in a manner consistent with the rest of the available tradition.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 236-238.

²⁴³ *Contra* Rubin 1995, p. 254. Rubin's claim that Khusraw's tax reform involved a rehabilitation of a damaged agricultural infrastructure is based on a single line in the *Shāhnāma*, Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, I. 106:

famine in the reign of Kavād I at the outbreak of the Mazdakite disorders,²⁴⁴ but there is no evidence in any source that Iran's agricultural infrastructure had collapsed and was in need of restoration. Dispossessed farmers *may* have been restored to their lands, as Rubin suggests,²⁴⁵ but there is no solid evidence of a wholesale failure of the agricultural industry before or during the reign of Khusraw. More importantly, however, Dīnawarī implies that Khusraw's reform of the land tax *increased* the cost of better and more cultivated land, and Ṭabarī's notice regarding the different cost of various crops amounts to the same thing. We cannot, therefore, infer that Khusraw's tax reform encouraged farming. It seems, in fact, that Khusraw was aware that his tax reform offered no incentive to cultivate land, as, according to Firdawsī, the punishment for not doing so was an especially violent death.²⁴⁶

Second, this reform does not represent a fundamental shift from a barter to a monetised economy.²⁴⁷ Ṭabarī, of course, mentions that the land tax had originally been paid in kind, but this does not mean that money had not been used for other transactions. Persian and Arabic sources are, as we have observed, silent on this topic, but to insist on a barter economy before Khusraw's tax reform is to dismiss the evidence of coins as flimflam, and to render nearly all Sasanian achievements, especially international trade, incomprehensible.²⁴⁸

Third, the tax reform was not introduced gradually.²⁴⁹ The suggestion of incremental introduction of a new tax is impossible to take seriously in almost any context. But an organised bureaucracy capable of

همه روی گیتی پر از داد کرد به هر جای ویرانی آباد کرد

This line probably refers to the reconstruction of ruined settlements, not to the cultivation of desert places. *can* mean "deserted," but the basic meaning is "ruined," and likewise آباد means primarily "settled," or "inhabited," and not "cultivated," which is a secondary meaning.

²⁴⁴ Qubād 1987, I. 215ff.

²⁴⁵ Rubin 1995, p. 254; p. 291.

²⁴⁶ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, II. 151-153:

که ویران بود بوم در بر من نتابد بر سایه ی فرّ من
کسی را که باشد برین پایکار اگر گیرد این کار دشوار خوار
کنم زنده بر دار چای که هست اگر سر فراز ست و گر زیر دست

²⁴⁷ *Contra* Rubin 2000, p. 254-255.

²⁴⁸ Howard-Johnston, 1995, p. 211-212.

²⁴⁹ *Contra* Rubin 2006, p. 279.

a cadastral survey of the entire Iranian empire would not have dragged its feet in putting the new taxes into action. Rubin adduces the testimony of the *Sīra* in this connexion. But the evidence of this text does *not* refer to the incremental application of the new land tax, but rather to a step-by-step campaign against corruption *after* the tax reform had taken effect.²⁵⁰ Ample notice may well have been given to all concerned, but the implementation of the new tax must have been swift and complete.

As far as positive reasons for the reform are concerned, Dīnawarī and Firdawsī do not offer us anything. But Ṭabarī and the *Sīra* offer roughly the same explanation. Ṭabarī mentions only the military advantage of accumulating a surplus of wealth: in case of emergency, such as a breach of the frontier, a new levy would not be necessary.²⁵¹ The *Sīra* connects the reforms to the strength of the military more generally,²⁵² but also alludes to the advantage of a cash surplus.²⁵³ We can well imagine how oppressive sudden and unexpected levies would be for the peasantry: a fixed rate of taxation, a regular and predictable income, and a cash surplus would facilitate funding the military without harming the populace. The reasons behind Khusraw's tax reforms may well have been this simple—but there is simply no way to tell, and here all speculation must stop.

²⁵⁰ The reforms were probably in place by 540, in time for the war with New Rome, and the *Sīra*'s earliest notice relative to the crackdown is 559 (Gariboldi 2006, p. 194).

²⁵¹ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 961: ll. 1-5. Breach of the frontier is in fact the only example given (*Ibid.*, ll. 1-2): ما لو اتانا عن ثغر من ثغورنا او طرف من اطرافنا ففق

²⁵² "Les paysans et les contribuables du kharāj constituent les mains des guerriers et des soldats, ils font leur force. A leur tour, les guerriers constituent les mains des *ahl al-kharāj* et font leur force...ils sont comme deux mains qui s'entraident, comme deux pieds venant l'un au secours de l'autre" (Grignaschi 1966, p. 26-27).

²⁵³ "A part d'autres avantages, de telles mesures rehaussent le décor, enrichissent les sujets et, en cas de besoin, permettent au souverain de leur demander ce qui lui est nécessaire" (*Ibid.*, p. 18).

III.3.b. KHUSRAW'S CRACKDOWN ON CORRUPTION

Khusraw's tax reform was followed by a campaign against corruption in the provinces. The *Sīra* is our only source for this. The text is concerned not with details of the implementation of the tax reform,²⁵⁴ but rather with controlling corrupt officials²⁵⁵ *after* the implementation of the reform, and the main type of corruption seems to have been embezzlement.²⁵⁶ We find implications, for instance, that taxes were levied on the dead and on young children.²⁵⁷

The vagueness of the *Sīra*, reminiscent of official propaganda, prevents us from determining exactly what other forms of corruption may have been involved. That embezzlement was one of the greatest problems seems clear, but the *Sīra* hints that there were others. In Khusraw's twenty-eighth regnal year, 559, each mobad in charge of certain jurisdictions was required to submit a report on the condition of the peasantry, focusing both on the humiliations and the equitable acts that had been visited on them.²⁵⁸ Assemblies of taxpayers were convoked before local dignitaries,²⁵⁹ and Khusraw sent "trustworthy persons" to try to arrange assemblies of the peasants and the upper classes.²⁶⁰ What

²⁵⁴ "...j'ai constaté un si grand désordre que je n'ai pas cru pouvoir y apporter remède, sinon en rétablissant la justice et en fixant l'impôt de chaque pays, de chaque contrée, de chaque canton, et de chaque homme" (*Ibid.*). This all it tells us about the initiation of the reform.

²⁵⁵ Rubin 1995, p. 277.

²⁵⁶ The provincial governors were apparently collecting and keeping more than their share, and judges (presumably Zoroastrian clerics) were appointed to oversee the payment of taxes and to issue receipts (Grignaschi 1966, p. 18).

²⁵⁷ "J'ai décidé...qu'on devait remettre l'impôt des morts et ne pas exiger l'impôts des jeunes qui n'avaient pas atteint l'âge de payer [la capitation]" (*Ibid.*).

²⁵⁸ Grignaschi 1966, p. 20.

²⁵⁹ These assemblies were held in the presence "du chef, du juge, du scribe, et de l'*amīn*" (*Ibid.*). The last rank is of doubtful meaning (*Ibid.*, p. 37: n. 49).

²⁶⁰ Grignaschi's translation suggests that Khusraw desired "l'union entre les gouverneurs et les paysans, les humbles et les nobles" (*Ibid.*, p. 20-21). This is misleading as the Arabic suggests merely that various classes met together in one place. Khusraw gave orders to his governors (Grignaschi 1971, p. 132):

ليجمعوا بينهم وبين اهل ارضيهم وبين وضييعهم وشريفهم

were these bodies meant to achieve? The *Sīra* is extremely vague: Khusraw requests merely that they report all business to him truthfully.²⁶¹

Any invocation of the Sasanian class system is bound to trigger thoughts of Mazdakism, the doctrine by which the heresiarch Mazdak "incited the lower classes against the upper."²⁶² This is, of course, nowhere mentioned in the *Sīra*. One might also be tempted to link the economic plight of the Iranian underclass to Crone's claim that Khusraw's reforms provoked the Mazdakite revolt.²⁶³ The *Sīra* made no appearance in Crone's article, despite its being very much germane to her point, as it deals more directly with the oppression of the peasantry than perhaps any other source. The grievances to which the *Sīra* dimly alludes, however, do not remind us of a mass movement, nor can they be linked in any straightforward way to Mazdakism. The absence even of a *reminiscence* of Mazdakism from the *Sīra*, which is otherwise interested in certain theological aberrations,²⁶⁴ is surprising. We can recall the *Sīra*'s fragmentary nature, we can stress a selectivity in what is reported in it, but it is as though the Mazdakite upheaval, whatever its original nature, had been long forgotten.

²⁶¹ "Je les ai chargés de nous rapporter toutes les affaires conformément à la vérité et à la sincérité, dans les termes mêmes dans lesquels ces affaires leur avaient été présentées" (Grignaschi 1966, p. 21).

²⁶² Tabarī tells us that Mazdak السفلة على العلية (Tabarī 1893, p. 894: l. 15).

²⁶³ See note 225.

²⁶⁴ Grignaschi 1966, p. 16-17.

III.3.c. THE REORGANISATION OF THE IRANIAN ARMY

Tabarī, Dīnawarī and Firdawsī include a troop inspection, conducted by a man named Bābak, following Khusraw's tax reform, as though a significant change in military organisation were its ultimate purpose.²⁶⁵ It is unreasonable to infer, however, that Khusraw created the first standing army in Iranian history,²⁶⁶ as previous Sasanian military success cannot be explained if we do so. The *Shāhnāma* suggests a project of active recruitment,²⁶⁷ and we might infer more frequent musters and inspections also.

Command of the army was surely facilitated by Khusraw's quadripartition of the empire, but our sources do not suggest how. The quadripartition, as we have noted above, is not mentioned in the *Sīra*, and the description of it in Tabarī, Dīnawarī, and the *Shāhnāma* is woefully deficient and confused. Tabarī's treatment is, nevertheless, the fullest among these. Whereas there had been one supreme commander of the

²⁶⁵ This is the episode about Bābak, who in Dīnawarī and in Tabarī is a scribe, but in Firdawsī is a mobad (Dīnawarī 1888, p. 73: l. 20 - p. 75: l. 9; Tabarī 1893, p. 963: l. 12 - p. 965: l. 5; Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 180-292). Dīnawarī's treatment does not proceed immediately from the tax reform to Bābak's inspection: a brief discussion of Khusraw's patronage of philosophy and science, and his vizier Buzurjmihr is introduced. (Dīnawarī, p. 73: ll. 18-20).

²⁶⁶ Contra Rubin 1995, p. 291.

²⁶⁷ Rubin's suggestion (Rubin 1995, p. 289-291) that Khusraw created a standing army is based on a speech put into the mouth of Khusraw that makes the king complain of the difficulty in amassing treasure for levying troops without somehow oppressing the peasantry—a difficulty which he solves by adding troops drawn from the nobility, and funded by the crown. Khusraw expresses the problem (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 238-240):

آرم ز هر سو سپاه	بخوادم ز هر کشوری رزم خواه
نگردد سپاه انجمن جز به گنج	به بی مردی آید هم از گنج رنج
اگر بد به درویش خاهد رسید	ازین آرزو دل بیاید برید

He describes the letter, circulated throughout his kingdom, wherein he invited the nobles to send their sons to be trained for the army (*Ibid.*, ll. 242-248). Khusraw declares his success (*Ibid.*, ll. 252-253):

کنون لاجرم روی گیتی به مرد	بیارستم تا کی آید نبرد
مرا ساز و لشکر ز شاهان پیش	فزون ست و هم دانش و رای پیش

Surely this measure does not indicate the radical change suggested by Rubin, but merely, as Khusraw himself remarks, that the Iranian army was bigger and better than ever before.

army, whom Ṭabarī calls the *iṣbahbadha*, an arabicised form of the Persian *spāhbad*, Khusraw "divided this office and rank" among four men.²⁶⁸ Each general²⁶⁹ oversaw a region of the empire, which was, as our sources agree, partitioned in quarters. No sources agree on the areas included within the quarters, and Ṭabarī, Dīnawarī, and Firdawsī give them different names.²⁷⁰ There is, furthermore, an alarming disagreement

²⁶⁸ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 894: l. 6: قَرَقَ كَسْرَى هَذِهِ الْوَلَايَةَ وَالْمَرْتَبَةَ بَيْنَ أَرْبَعَةِ أَصْبَهِيذِينَ

²⁶⁹ Ṭabarī's word *اصبهيذ* is an Arabicised form of the Middle Persian *spāh-pat*, which means literally "overseer of the army," but "general" is the usual translation (Nyberg, H. S. *Manual of Pahlavi*, v.2, 1974, p. 177). This is roughly how Ṭabarī defines it, saying (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 894, l. 5): كَانَ بَلَى الْأَصْبَهِيذَةِ وَهِيَ الرَّأْسَةُ عَلَى الْجَنُوبِ

²⁷⁰ The east (says Ṭabarī) included Khurāsān and its adjoining regions. The west must have the territories bordering on the Roman Empire, though Ṭabarī does not say so. That there was an *اصبهيذ* in the west is all that we are told (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 894: l. 7-8). The south, or *nūmroz* (*Ibid.*, l. 8) as Ṭabarī calls it in Persian, was the land of Yemen. The north was Ādharbāyjān and its surrounding regions, which Ṭabarī calls "the land of the Khazar" (بلاد الخزر) (*Ibid.*, l. 9)). Firdawsī retains the four-fold division (جهان را) (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, l. 70)), but the territories listed are not the same. Qum and Ispahān are confounded with Ādharbāyjān and Armenia, which are much further north (*Ibid.*, ll. 72-4). Pārs and Ahvāz are grouped with the "marches of the Khazars," but the two regions are not near one another, and Firdawsī may also include Bactria here (*Ibid.*, l. 75):

سَيُومِ پَارِسَ وَ اِهَوَازَ وَ مَرَزُ خَزَرِ زِ خَاوَرِ وَرَا بُودَتَا بَاخْتَرِ

The second hemistich is somewhat confusing as *خاور* can mean either "east" or "west," and the meanings of *باختر* include "east," "west," and "Bactria." In the latter case, I think "Bactria" is the most obvious choice, and (since Bactria is in the east) the sense of the hemistich would be that one extremity of this quarter is in the west and the other is Bactria. It is not clear whether Firdawsī wants to include Bactria in this portion, or whether he means to say that the third quarter ended at Bactria. The grammar supports either meaning. Firdawsī makes no mention of Yemen, and Irāq and "the Land of Rūm" are his final quarter (چهارم عراق آمد و بوم روم) (*Ibid.*, l. 76)). We must dismiss the recurrence of the "Land of the Khazars," as it is an anachronism. Firdawsī and Ṭabarī probably mean nothing more than the Caucasus or the lands to the north of it. Furthermore, Firdawsī's claim that Rome was included in Khusraw's reforms cannot be correct. Nevertheless, Rome did pay tribute to Iran in the reign of Khusraw, and the *Shāhnāma* seems to preserve a piece of Sasanian propaganda, exaggerating the tributary condition of a rival power. Dīnawarī gives each quarter an ordinal number, and then describes its contents (Dīnawarī, p. 69: ll. 11-16). The first quarter was Khurāsān and Sistān and Kirmān; the second was Isfahān, Qumm, Jabal, Ādharbāyjān and Armenia; the third was Fārs and Ahwāz down to Bahrayn; the fourth was Irāq unto the border with the Kingdom of Rūm. Even when manifest errors are removed, a confused geography remains. Only the four-fold division is common to the three sources.

over whether this was a military measure at all: neither Dīnawarī, nor Firdawsī, nor the *Sīra* use the term *spāhbad*, and Dīnawarī claims that Khusraw appointed over each quarter of the empire not a general, but rather "a trustworthy man."²⁷¹ Nevertheless, the reality of Khusraw's quartering of the empire is established by both sigillography and Armenian and Persian geographical works. Seals whose inscriptions include a personal name followed by one of the cardinal points and title *spāhbad*²⁷² prove both that the quadripartition actually happened, and that it was a military development. The *Geography* of Ananias of Shirak is the earliest textual evidence for the quadripartition, as it was composed in the middle decades of the seventh century.²⁷³ In this text, the four quarters are named after the cardinal points.²⁷⁴ Similar testimony is offered by the *Shahrestānīhā-i-Ērān*, a geographical treatise composed in Pahlavi during the reign of the Caliph al-Manṣūr (A.D. 712-775).²⁷⁵ To summarise the places which each text situates within each *kust* (such seems to have been the technical term for the division) would require a lengthy exposition, but the fact is that the contents of each *kust* are radically different in each source. This may be a sign that the system was refined over time, or possibly an indication that certain authors filled in the *kusts* based on their own knowledge or conjecture. Ṭabarī, Firdawsī, and Dīnawarī may have suspected this and may have deliberately simplified their own accounts.

It is unfortunate that our authors do not explain what the quadripartition was meant to do. Modern authors tend to misunderstand it also. First, Gyselen's suggestion that the jurisdiction of each *Spāhbad*

²⁷¹ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 69: l. 12: رَجُلًا مِنْ ثِقَاتِهِ

²⁷² Gyselen 2001, p. 12; Gyselen 2008, *passim*.

²⁷³ Hewsen believes that the work was composed by Ananias himself, who lived c. 610-685 (Ananias 1992, p. 12). Ananias probably had at his disposal geographical data reflecting the arrangements made in the Roman-Persian treaty of 591.

²⁷⁴ *K'usti Xarbaran* (the west), *K'usti Nmroj* (the south), *K'usti Xorasan* (the east), and *K'usti Kapkoh* (the north, but lit., "the Caucasus") (*Ibid.*, p. 72).

²⁷⁵ This text definitely includes later interpolations, but Markwart insists that it is founded on versions of the Middle Persian epic romances older than those used by Daqīqī and Firdawsī. This is adduced on the grounds that the *Shahrestānīhā-i-Ērān* does not represent the Turanians as "Turks," the unhistorical appellation by which they are known in the *Shāhnāma*. In the *Shahrestānīhā-i-Ērān*, the four quarters are named *Kust i Xvarāsān* (the East), *kust i Xvarbarān* (the west), *kust i Nēmroc* (the south), and *kust i Ānūrpātākān* (the north) (Markwart 1931, p. 5).

was deliberately vague²⁷⁶ should perhaps be modified. The cities and towns must have been carefully delineated, otherwise the system would have caused more problems than it was meant to solve. Second, Pourshariati has judged that the *kust* system was "yet another attempt at undercutting the powers of the nobility."²⁷⁷ This may have been true, but it cannot have been the only reason for the reform. Iran had often been forced to fight on two fronts, in the west with New Rome and in the east with the Hephthalites, and armies were frequently recalled from one front to another. The new system of four *Spāhbad*s would have allowed a swift and coordinated response to attacks in multiple theatres of war.

²⁷⁶ "...if the duty of a general was first and foremost to lead his soldiers to war, rather than to administer a territory, the question of the exact boundary between 'Eastern Side' and 'Western Side' loses its importance" (Gyselen 2001, p. 15-16).

²⁷⁷ Pourshariati 2008, p. 95.

III.3.d. THE INTRODUCTION OF NOMADS INTO THE IRANIAN ARMY

The slaughter and resettlement of nomads on the Iranian frontier should be connected with Khusraw's reforms. Apart from quelling unrest in certain regions, Khusraw's internal wars seem to have aimed at augmenting the strength of the Iranian army with foreign troops. These troops were employed to defend the frontier—a policy familiar from Roman and Chinese history. Dīnawarī does not mention these conflicts at all, and Ṭabarī and Firdawsī are the fullest sources on the introduction of minor tribes into the Iranian army. But it is the *Sīra*'s notice on the introduction of the Turks that is most significant in this connexion.

The *Sīra* reports that four Turkish tribes submitted to Khusraw early in 568.²⁷⁸ Fifty thousand warriors "avec leurs femmes, leurs fils et leurs serviteurs" were admitted on Khusraw's authority by the Marzbān of the Gate of Sūl, and a military inspection followed not long thereafter.²⁷⁹ The Turks were divided into seven ranks, and Khusraw gave estates and wages to the Turkish chieftains. Though it is tempting to speak of "enfeoffing" these Turks,²⁸⁰ it is always misleading to allude to feudalism outside its proper context. Nevertheless, it seems clear that Khusraw intended to incorporate the Turkish leaders not only into his army, but also into Iranian society. The ranks granted must have corresponded with positions already held by the Turks, and must also have been recognisable to Persians also. We know nothing about the relationship that must have developed between the Turkish chieftains and Khusraw, but we might adduce as a parallel the example of Catulphus, the Hephthalite refugee who fled to Iran and maintained a privileged position as an advisor at the Persian court.²⁸¹

The *Sīra* offers information on enlisting foreign tribes which other sources allude to only dimly. Ṭabarī and Firdawsī mention the slaughter and subjugation of vast numbers of persons among such tribes as the Alans, the Daylamites, and the Gīlānīs.²⁸² We find only that some of the

²⁷⁸ Grignaschi 1996, p. 23.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁸⁰ Rubin 1995, p. 294.

²⁸¹ Menander 1985, *Frag.* 10.1: ll. 16-17.

²⁸² Ṭabarī, p. 795: ll. 3ff; p. 890: l. 12ff; Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 345ff.

survivors were settled in Ādharbāyjan,²⁸³ but it seems reasonable to infer that much the same process as is mentioned in the *Sīra* took place. In this connexion, we should note that Agathias reports that Daylamites, as well as Sabir Huns, were mercenaries in the Persian army.²⁸⁴ The description of the conflict in Ṭabarī and Firdawsī are nevertheless hyperbolic,²⁸⁵ and probably originated in royal propaganda, but the scale of slaughter must have been commensurate with the threat posed by these peoples to Iran, and *Sīra* confirms that the danger was indeed great. In Khusraw's twenty-eighth regnal year (559), a personal examination of the plight of the peasants was prevented because Khusraw was preoccupied with war against his enemies and the defence of the frontier.²⁸⁶ Immediately following this, we find a notice that Khusraw's realm had been delivered from its enemies.²⁸⁷ We cannot determine with certainty whether these two notices refer to the same event, but it seems likely. The second notice clearly refers to the same events mentioned in Ṭabarī and Firdawsī: many tribes were attacked, and "il ne restait que deux mille hommes du Deylem."²⁸⁸

Precisely why so many foreign troops were brought into the Iranian army is not clear in our sources. Nevertheless, enlisting the nomads themselves must have proved a solution to the problem of frontier defence, which should not have occupied the bulk of Iranian troops, as they were needed in the west. The number of Turks enlisted seems very high, and the temptation to infer a barbarisation of the Iranian army is great. But this need not imply that Khusraw's project of reforming the

²⁸³ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 795: l. 6: اسروا فاسكنوا آنر بیجان

²⁸⁴ Agathias 1967, IV.13.8.

²⁸⁵ Ṭabarī claims that the slaughter was very great (اعظم القتل) (Ṭabarī 1893, *Ibid.*, l. 12)). For Firdawsī, the slaughter of the tribes of Gīlān and Daylam was so fierce that (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, l. 410): خون در همه روی کشور بگشت and (*Ibid.*, l. 413): ز کشته بر هر سو یکی توده بود

²⁸⁶ "Je l'aurais fait, si une telle entreprise ne nous avait pas détourné de la guerre contre nos ennemis et la défense des frontières... Nous nous sommes éloignés [du palais?] et lui [[au mobedan mobad]] en avons laissé la charge" (Grignaschi 1966, p. 21).

²⁸⁷ "Lorsque Dieu eut mis le peuple entier de notre royaume à l'abri des ennemis..." (*Ibid.*). This notice, and the preceding one, are discussed in more detail below in the context of the downfall of the Hephthalites, to whom the notices do not pertain.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

army had failed, as Rubin suggests.²⁸⁹ We might rather infer a shortage of manpower, occasioned perhaps by the plague, which must have killed off much of Khusraw's army. I do not mean to advance too bold an assertion, for Persian sources say nothing about the plague. But Procopius informs us that the *entire* Persian army was infected whilst on campaign in the Levant in about 543.²⁹⁰ The Byzantine historian may exaggerate somewhat, but the eyewitness testimony of John of Ephesus reproduced in the Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre proves that the plague was very severe in the Near East,²⁹¹ and western Iran must have been hit hard. But the effect that the plague had on Iran has not really been studied, and this explanation, though it is better than suggesting the utter failure of Khusraw's military reform, cannot be asserted with confidence. Much of the army may also have been cut down in the wars with Rome and in those against the frontier nomads: our sources, of course, do not mention the Iranian death toll, but the severity of these conflicts, if our sources can be trusted, suggests that Persian losses may well have been high.

REMARKS

Internal peace and the performance of the Iranian war machine attest the success of the reforms. Khusraw's innovations were surely worthwhile in their own right, but competition with New Rome must have instigated change. Though the Eternal Peace in 532 brought a temporary end to armed conflict, Justinian and Khusraw probably vied for supremacy in domestic reform. Justinian's legal developments occupied the early 530s,²⁹² his reconstruction of the Church of the Holy Wisdom was achieved in 537, a building project throughout the Empire

²⁸⁹ Rubin 1995, p. 294.

²⁹⁰ Procopius 2006, II.xxiv.8.

²⁹¹ "Also (horrors) exceeding by far those previously narrated about the city of Alexandria took place from now on in the whole of Palestine, with the effect that villages and cities were left totally without inhabitants" (Witakowski 1996, p. 77). Ps. Dionysius has recycled material from John of Ephesus, whose work is the basis for all Syriac notices on the plague (Sarris 2007, p. 119).

²⁹² Moorhead 1994, p. 35.

dominated the decade,²⁹³ and Armenia was thoroughly reorganised.²⁹⁴ It is hard to imagine that most of Khusraw's reforms were *not* complete at the outbreak of war in 540, and we may infer that the Roman and Persian renovations were simultaneous. We can also infer constant contact between the two rival courts, and possibly a propaganda war, a few traces of which may well have come down to us in the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 52-60.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92-93.

III.4. THE EXTINCTION OF THE HEPHTHALITE EMPIRE

Within the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition the most important sources for the fall of the Hephthalites are Ṭabarī's *Annals*, Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, and Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. Most of the preliminary work on the relevant sources has been done by Widengren, who compares the accounts of Ibn Athīr, Tha'ālibī, Eutychius, Bal'amī, Mas'ūdī, *Nihāyat al-Irāb*, Mirkhond, *Majmal al-Tawārikh*, and the *Fārsnāma*.²⁹⁵ Following Widengren, we can exclude three accounts from consideration immediately. Khusraw's conquest of the Turks, China, India, and Tibet, as reported by Mas'ūdī, Bal'amī, is plainly fictitious.²⁹⁶

The other accounts require more serious scrutiny. Ṭabarī's first narrative²⁹⁷ introduces the leader of the Turks, Sinjibū Khāqān, who is positively identified as the killer of the Hephthalite king. We find, however, no mention of an alliance between Sinjibū and Khusraw: but we do meet the strange notion that the Turkish Khāqān took possession of Hephthalite territories, "save what Khusraw had conquered."²⁹⁸ Later, having won over several tribes, Sinjibū leads his menacing force towards Iran in the region of Šūl, and demands tribute. Some of the Khāqān's forces threatened Gurgān also. Khusraw does not respond to the threat of this two-pronged invasion, but the Khāqān retreats, overawed by the Iranian frontier defences. This account is followed by Ibn Athīr.²⁹⁹ Ṭabarī's second narrative³⁰⁰ is more elaborate. Khusraw himself leads an expedition of revenge against the Hephthalites. A marriage alliance with the Khāqān had *already* been contracted, and this is cited as the basis for Khusraw's inviting the Khāqān to march against the Hephthalites also. In this account, Khusraw himself kills the Hephthalite king, reaches Balkh, and "what lies beyond it," quarters his troops in Ferghana, and returns home through Khurāsān. This account is found also in Eutychius, Bal'amī, Mas'ūdī, and Tha'ālibī.³⁰¹

²⁹⁵ Widengren 1952, p. 69-94.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁹⁷ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 895: l. 12 - p. 896: l. 13.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 895: l. 16: *ألا ما كان كسرى غلب عليه منها*

²⁹⁹ Widengren 1952, p. 73.

³⁰⁰ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 899: ll. 2-7.

³⁰¹ Widengren 1952, p. 74.

One of Ṭabarī's earlier notices is usually connected with the foregoing narratives: Khusraw is said to have restored to his empire the territories of Sind, Bust, Arachosia, Zābulistān, and perhaps also Dardistān and Kābulistān.³⁰² The same is repeated by Ibn Athīr and Tha'ālibī.³⁰³ It is by comparison to Dīnawarī, however, who also adds Ṣighānīyān but omits Sind and Bust, that we learn that these territories had belonged to the Hephthalites³⁰⁴—a fact which cannot be inferred from Ṭabarī's testimony as we have it, though the two authors would appear to have used the same source. There is, however, no suggestion in Ṭabarī's *Annals* that these lands were recovered by military conquest,³⁰⁵ but Dīnawarī's account is unambiguous in alleging that Khusraw conquered Hephthalite territory.³⁰⁶ Dīnawarī's treatment is echoed by Mirkhond, *Nihāyat al-ʿIrāq*, *Majmal al-Tawārikh*, and Tha'ālibī.³⁰⁷ Widengren mistakenly includes the *Shāhnāma* among these accounts, but he should not have done so: Firdawsī's treatment is independent of the foregoing sources.³⁰⁸

There is an obvious contrast between Khusraw's passive rôle in Ṭabarī's first narrative, in which the Khāqān is the hero, and his more vigorous presence in the second narrative, in which the Khāqān is passive.³⁰⁹ The difficulty embedded in Ṭabarī's first narrative seems to amplify the problem: how can Khusraw have conquered *some* Hephthalite lands, amongst *all* those conquered by the Khāqān? The phrase "save what Khusraw had conquered" appears as an after-thought, which disrupts an otherwise straightforward description of the Khāqān's conquests. Grignaschi, accordingly, condemns this clause as totally

³⁰² Ṭabarī 1893, p. 894: ll. 10-13:

ارتجع... السند وبست والرخ و زابلستان وطخارستان و درستان و كابلستان

³⁰³ Widengren 1952, p. 72.

³⁰⁴ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 69: ll. 15-17:

ووجه الجيوش الى بلاد الهياطلة وافتتح تخارستان زابلستان كابلستان والصغانيان

³⁰⁵ The critical word is ارتجع (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 894: l. 10), simply the transitive verb "he returned."

³⁰⁶ Here the operative verb is افتتح (Dīnawarī 1888, p. 69: l. 16), "he conquered," "he captured," etc.

³⁰⁷ Widengren 1952, p. 77.

³⁰⁸ Grignaschi 1985, p. 235

³⁰⁹ Widengren 1952, p. 87.

contradictory to what precedes it.³¹⁰ Ṭabarī most probably inserted the phrase in anticipation of his second narrative, in which Khusraw vanquishes the Hephthalite king. Such exaggerations are unlikely to reflect Khusraw's own propaganda. Though Khusraw would probably have sought glory wherever possible, the exaggerations of Ṭabarī's second narrative—together with the absurd claims of Bal'amī, Mas'ūdī and the *Fārsnāma*—were probably added to the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition later.

When we have stripped away the unfortunate clause of Ṭabarī's first, and the impossible exaggerations of his second narrative, we seem to be left with a residue of several different stories, which have been heavily pruned and compressed, though some embellishment remains. The Turkish defeat of the Hephthalites and the Khāqān's demand for tribute and threat of war on Iran's borders have been conflated but are really two distinct episodes, whose true relationship has been forgotten. The Khāqān's march on Iran, furthermore, sounds like pure hyperbole, especially given the allegation of one hundred and ten thousand Turkish soldiers.³¹¹ If it ever really occurred, the military demonstration led by Hurmazd, as described by Dīnawarī, should probably be understood as a move to drive the Turks from the Iranian frontier.

³¹⁰ Grignaschi 1985, p. 243.

³¹¹ Ṭabarī 1893, p. 896: ll. 1-2: اقبل في مائة الف وعشرة آلاف مقاتل

III.4.a. THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE TURKS

Turkish supremacy in the Asiatic steppe came with their defeat of the Rouran in 552.³¹² Thereafter the Turkish advance towards Transoxiana was very rapid. The Zhou dynastic annals of 555 describe the Turkish Empire as stretching from the Gulf of Liao-tung in the east to the Aral Sea, or possibly even the Caspian, and northwards from the Chinese border for "five or six thousand *li*."³¹³ Firdawsī claims that Turkish dominion had reached the region of Chāch on the further side of the Jaxartes, and now extended from the borders of China to the banks of the Oxus—implying that Transoxiana was in Turkish hands.³¹⁴ This southward expansion cannot have happened later than 558, when the last Hephthalite embassy was dispatched to the Chinese court.³¹⁵ Turkish power did not include Sogdiana, for it belonged to the Hephthalites. The Turkish army, Firdawsī tells us, assembled at and marched from a place called Qujquārbāshī. The word is Turkish for "Ram's Head," and may denote a mountain or hill that gave its name to the circumjacent region. It must have been a name familiar to Firdawsī's Ghaznavid audience, but it is as yet impossible to say where this is.

The empire of the Hephthalites, Firdawsī tells us, included all Sogdiana as far as the Oxus.³¹⁶ The Hephthalite camp was at Bukhārā

³¹² "Im 1. Monat des 1. Jahres (552) des Kaisers Fei-ti der West-Wei schickte T'u-men Truppen zum Angriff gegen die Ju-ju. Die Ju-ju wurden nördlich von Huai-huang schwer geschlagen" (Liu 1958, p. 7). For a recent discussion of the Turkish *Machtergreifung* see Howard-Johnston 2011, p. 12-14.

³¹³ The Khāqān whom the Annals called *Sse-kin* (also known as Mu-han) added much territory to the Turkish Empire: "Mittels seiner Macht unterwarf er alle Staaten außerhalb der chinesischen Grenze, ein Gebiet, daß sich von Westen des Liao-Meers (Golf von Liao-tung) im Osten, bis zum West-meer im Westen, zehntausend li, und vom Norden fünf-oder sechstausend li, erstreckte" (Liu 1958, p. 8). The so-called "Western Sea" might refer to either the Aral or the Caspian, but Liu believes it is the latter (*Ibid.*, p. 495: n. 41). The Chinese *li* is a unit of distance approximately equal to a quarter of a mile.

³¹⁴ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, I. 1760: به گل زریون بود از آن روی چاچ
خاقان چین (*Ibid.*, I. 1758) is the subject of this sentence. The same is mentioned in one of Khusraw's speeches (*Ibid.*, I. 1856): نشستہ ست خاقان بدان روی چاچ
همان تالاب رود جیحون ز چین (*Ibid.*, I. 1759):

³¹⁵ *Histoire des Tcheou*, chap. L foll. 11 in Specht 1883, p. 345. Liu has included no direct notices of the Hephthalites in his work.

³¹⁶ This is inferred from the travels of the Turkish ambassador from Turkish territory to

(where the Turks attack them),³¹⁷ and they are said to draw their troops from Balkh, Shignān, Āmūy, Zam, Khutlān, Tirmiz, and Vīsa-Gird.³¹⁸ These cities suggest that the centre of the Hephthalite Empire was in either eastern Bactria or Tukhāristān.³¹⁹ Much the same thing is suggested by Dīnawārī's and Ṭabarī's list of territories restored to Iran by Khusraw, already discussed above. Though it is unlikely that Khusraw actually recovered all places mentioned, these lands from Sind to Ṣighānīyān must have been part of the Hephthalite Empire at its fullest extent. Procopius claims that the Hephthalite capital was Gorgo,³²⁰ a place which cannot be identified, but it was actually at Balkh, as Chinese sources suggest.³²¹ Hephthalite fortifications along the Zarafshān river, the so-called Wall of Kanpirak, seem to mark the northwestern frontier of their empire in Sogdiana.³²² Two Hephthalite castles have been found, one in the Oxus Delta at Kuyuk-Kalā, the other at Barak-Tam to the southeast of the Aral Sea,³²³ but no major Hephthalite settlements so far west have been identified. Modern archaeology, however, suggests that the Hephthalite Empire extended much further to the north and east than the authors of the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition seem to acknowledge.

Iran. He passes through the lands of the Hephthalites—a dangerous undertaking (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 1774-1775):

گنر مرد را سوی هیتال بود همه ره پر از تیغ گول پال بود
ز سغد اندرون تا به جیجون سپاه کشیده رده پیش هیتال شاه

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, l. 1800:

بخارا پر از گرد و گویال بود که لشکر گاه شاه هیتال بود

The battle of Bukhārā is described in Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 1801-1813.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, l. 1794-1795:

ز بلخ و ز شگنان و آموی و زم سلیح و سپه خواست و گنج درم
ز ختلان و از ترمذ و ویسه گرد ز هر سو سپاه اندر آورد گرد

³¹⁹ This accords well with Grenet's location of the heartland of Hephthalite power (Grenet 2002, p. 210).

³²⁰ He calls it Γοργὼ (Procopius 2006, I.iii.2).

³²¹ Specht, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

³²² Grenet 2002, p. 213.

³²³ For Kuyuk-Kala see Frumkin 1970, p. 99. For Barak-Tam see Frumkin 1970, p. 104. Grégoire's book is an exhaustive summary of all contemporary Soviet archaeological work in Central Asia. Not having any Russian, I am unable to consult the relevant work of Tolstov (1948), and Nerazik and Rapoport (1959) cited and summarised by Frumkin.

Litvinskij believes that the Hephthalites held sway over Karashahr, Urumqi, Kashghar, and Khotan, and bases himself on the work of several Russian archaeologists.³²⁴ His claim, however, that the Hephthalites had taken Turfān in 479 is probably mistaken: a recent excavation at Turfān alleged no "non-Chinese influence" in the region from the fourth to the sixth centuries.³²⁵ If Litvinskij is otherwise correct, we can fix Urumqi as the northernmost, and Karashahr as the easternmost, extremities of the Hephthalite empire, and Gandhara and Kashmir, the southernmost parts, were added to the empire in 509.³²⁶

The places mentioned by Litvinskij are omitted by the *Khudāy-Nāma* authors altogether: had they been included in the Persian and Arabic sources, we should have been astonished at their accuracy. But what is significant is that Dīnawārī, Ṭabarī, and Firdawsī do not attribute to the Hephthalites any territory which they did not actually possess.

³²⁴ Litvinskij 1998, p. 104.

³²⁵ Juhl 1999, p. 54. Han Chinese culture predominated in Turfān, and "if there were societies in the region adhering to other sets of cultural values, these are not to be found in the archaeological records" (*Ibid.*, p. 56).

³²⁶ Litvinskij 1998, p. 104.

III.4.b. THE BATTLE OF BUKHĀRĀ

The geographical details above suggest that the Turkish and Hephthalite frontiers were dangerously close. The boundaries of the two states may well have been disputed, and conflict was probably inevitable. A glance at a map of Central Asia will show, in light of the foregoing geographical discussion, that the two Empires were, for the most part, separated by the T'ien Shan and Altai mountain ranges. The Hephthalite position at Urumqi in Dzungaria had no natural defence against an attack launched from the Altai Mountains directly to the north, but it was in Sogdiana that the Hephthalites were most vulnerable. The decisive battle took place at Bukhārā,³²⁷ and the Hephthalite Empire relinquished all Sogdiana and was probably driven beyond the Hindukush, but was not totally destroyed. A new king, Faghānīsh, was appointed as little more than a client of Iran,³²⁸ and Hephthalite principalities endured in the region of the Hindukush until the eighth century.

Khusraw has no direct involvement in Firdawsī's narrative of the Turkish and Hephthalite war. The alliance suggested at the beginning of the narrative cannot be linked to any military cooperation between the Persians and Turks, and Firdawsī describes no such action. Nevertheless, there are two notices in the *Sīra* which Grignaschi was tempted to connect to the downfall of the Hephthalites. These are Khusraw's frontier war in 559, and the ensuing claim that Iran had been delivered of her enemies, which have already been discussed above. Close examination of these shows that Grignaschi was mistaken. The fact that the first notice does not mention the Hephthalites is to say the least problematic for Grignaschi's inference,³²⁹ as there is no reason why the downfall of that hostile power should have been concealed, whether or not Khusraw

³²⁷ Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, ll. 1800ff.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, ll. 1826-1829:

نداریم ما تاب خاقان خین	گزر کرد باید به ایران زمین
گر ایدونک فرمان برد غاتفر	ببندد به فرمان کسری کمر
سپارد بدو شهر هیتال را	فرامش کند گرز و گویال را
وگر نه خود از یخمه ی خوشنواز	گزینیم جنگ آوری سر فراز

This is part of a speech put into the mouths of the Hephthalite nobles.

³²⁹ "A notre sens ce passage...ne peut se rapporter qu'à une campagne contre le puissant empire hephthalite" (Grignaschi 1966, p. 38: n. 54).

had anything to do with it. There is nothing in Menander's *History* that suggests the involvement of the Persians or any other nation in the Turkish war against the Hephthalites.³³⁰ Khusraw's relationship with the Turks before the war was mainly diplomatic: he connived at and encouraged Turkish aggression, and may have assisted the Turks with financial support and military intelligence, but there is no good evidence that the Persians attacked the Hephthalites also.

Iran's mainly diplomatic involvement in the war, however, did not prevent Khusraw from advertising himself as conqueror of the Hephthalites³³¹—a claim made by the Turks also in 568.³³² It is significant, though, that Menander makes the Emperor Justin interrogate the Turkish ambassador, as though he were testing the Persian claim that they crushed the Hephthalites, and it is clear that Justin does not believe the Persians.³³³ We might therefore suggest that the origin of the Persian claim is deliberate disinformation directed at New Rome. This helps to explain the confusion that surrounds the territories which Khusraw is said to have acquired.³³⁴ There is no consensus among scholars, and it is probably impossible to determine precisely what, if anything, was added to the Persian empire.³³⁵

³³⁰ Silzabul mentions the war as entirely his own undertaking, and Menander does not correct or contradict him: Καὶ ἡνίκα (the Khāqān boasts) μοι ὁ κατὰ τῶν Ἐφθαλιτῶν διανυσθῆσεται πόλεμος, ἐπιθήσομαι καὶ Ἀβάροις καὶ τὰς ἐμὰς ἡκιστα φευξοῦνται δυνάμεις. ταῦτα λέγεται ἐπικόμψαντα τὸν Σιλζιβουλὸν ἔχεισθαι τῆς Ἐφθαλίτας ὁρμῆς (Menander 1985, *Frag.* 4.2: 7-11).

³³¹ The Persian ambassador boast of Khusraw ὅτι τῶν Ἐφθαλιτῶν κατεστρέψατο δύναμιν (*Ibid.*, *Frag.* 6.1: 207-208).

³³² The Turks ἔλεξαν ὡς παρεστήσαντο καὶ Ἐφθαλίτας μέχρι καὶ ἐς φόρου ἀπαγωγὴν (*Ibid.*, *Frag.* 10.1: 73-74).

³³³ The interrogation is found in Menander 1985, *Frag.* 10.1: 68-95. See also Blockley's note in Menander 1985, p. 263: n. 121. We know that Justin disbelieves the Persians because an alliance is formed with the Turks based on the truth of their claim.

³³⁴ Grignaschi, whose treatment of this matter is probably the best, suspects that Khusraw acquired only Arachosia and Zābulistān (Grignaschi 1985, p. 245).

³³⁵ *Contra* Howard-Johnston, who believes that the Persians were "offered a swathe of territory in western and southern Bactria together with a long tongue of land extending through Arachosia to the Indus plain" (Howard-Johnston 2011, p. 13). This territorial concession seems to be based on Menander Protector (Menander 1985, *Frag.* 4.2-3), but we should probably doubt it if it is based on Persian disinformation, as I have suggested above.

Among all sources of the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition, it is only Firdawsī who offers an explanation for the outbreak of war. It was provoked by Hephthalite intelligence of a Turkish embassy to Iran. Fearing a Turkish and Persian alliance, Ghātfar, the Hephthalite king, orders the interception and murder of the Turkish ambassador.³³⁶ A punitive expedition against the entire Hephthalite nation ensues.

There may be some truth to this report about the expedition. But in any case, population pressure, or simply the nomadic lifestyle, as we have already noted, may have made the southern expansion of the Turks inevitable. It is possible, however, that Hephthalite dominion in Sogdiana had prevented the Turks from using Sogdian merchants and *entrepôts* from selling silk in Persian markets. Such is implied in Photius' summary of the *History* of Theophanes of Byzantium. Since the defeat of Pērōz in 484, we are told, the Hephthalites had controlled the trading stations and ports involved in the Chinese silk trade: the Turks took over these *entrepôts* when they defeated the Hephthalites.³³⁷ This is meagre material, but it does establish the relevant link. The symbiosis of the Turks and Sogdians, furthermore, has been well proven by de la Vaissière—a relationship which the Turks seem to have inherited from the Rouran and earlier nomads.³³⁸ Sogdian management of the Turkish silk trade is suggested in the Zhou Annals,³³⁹ and proved by a notice in Menander.³⁴⁰ Hephthalite control of Sogdiana since 509 had cut off communication between that region and China, and normal relations resumed immediately after the war in 564.³⁴¹ Hephthalite power in

³³⁶ Ghātfar declares (Nūshīn-Ravān 1987, l. 1780-1782):

اگر شاه ایران و خاقان چین
بسازند و از دل کنند آفرین
هراس ست ازین دوستی بهر ما
برین روی ویران شود شهر ما
بباید یکی تاختن ساختن
جهان از فرستاده پرداختن.

³³⁷ οἱ γὰρ Τοῦρκοι τότε τὰ τε Σηρῶν ἐμπορία καὶ τοὺς λιμένας κατεῖχον. ταῦτα δὲ πρὶν μὲν Πέρσαι κατεῖχον, Ἐφθαλάνου δὲ τοῦ Ἐφθαλιτῶν βασιλέως... Περὶ τὴν καὶ Πέρσας νικήσαντος ἀφηρέθησαν μὲν τούτων οἱ Πέρσαι δεσπότης δὲ κατέστησαν Ἐφθαλίται. οὗς μικρῷ ὕστερον μαχῇ νικήσαντες Τοῦρκοι ἀφεῖλον ἐξ αὐτῶν καὶ ταῦτα (Photius 2003, Cod. 64: 26b).

³³⁸ De la Vaissière 2004, p. 186.

³³⁹ Ecsedy 1968, p. 132; de la Vaissière 2004, p. 184.

³⁴⁰ The Sogdians are said to have asked the Turks πρεσβεῖαν στεῖλαι ὡς Πέρσας, ὡς ἂν ἐκεῖσε ἀπιόντες οἱ Σογδαῖται ὄνιον παράσχοιντο τὴν μεταξὺ τοῖς Μήδοις (Menander 1985, *Frag.* 10.1: 3-4).

³⁴¹ Enoki 1959, p. 27; Litvinskij 1998, p. 104.

Dzungaria was poised to menace important Sogdian bases in Gansu,³⁴² but Hephthalite possession of Sogdiana itself meant that Sogdian trading connexions further south and west could not be exploited. The Chinese gave the Turks one hundred thousand rolls of silk, amongst other gifts, each year as tribute,³⁴³ and this commodity was useless unless it could be sold, and Iran was not only an important intermediary between the Turks and the Romans, but was also a customer: the Turks and Persians had good reason to wrest Sogdiana from Hephthalite control.

The most vexing problem of this episode in Iranian history has been left to the end. What is the date of the downfall of the Hephthalite Empire? Stein's conjecture that it must have occurred immediately after 557, in the wake of the Roman armistice, is founded on the assumption that Khusraw himself *attacked* the Hephthalites.³⁴⁴ If the interpretation above be correct, Stein's dating cannot stand. Relying on the evidence in Menander's *History*, I am inclined to put the battle of Bukhārā and fall of the Hephthalites in either 563 or 564 for the following reasons. Silzabul's furious boast that he will smite the Avars after his war with the Hephthalites is probably a reaction to the 562 Avar embassy to Justinian,³⁴⁵ and not a response to earlier, less significant contact in 557. We may infer, therefore, that the Turkish war on the Hephthalites—whenever it had begun—was still raging in the early 560s. But it cannot have lasted long past 563: a Turkish ambassador announces to the Romans in 568, as we have seen,³⁴⁶ that his nation had, by that date, *already* subjugated the Hephthalites.

³⁴² The Sogdian presence in Gansu is proved by archaeological evidence (de la Vaissière 2004, p. 184).

³⁴³ In 560 the Chinese annals note: "Da unser kaiserliches Haus mit ihnen durch die Heirat in (enger) Verbindung stand, schenkte es ihnen jährlich 100 000 Stück Seide (tseng), Floretteide (sü), Brokat (kin) und bunte Seide (ts'ai)" (Liu 1958, p. 13).

³⁴⁴ Stein 1949, p. 518: n. 1.

³⁴⁵ For the embassy see Menander 1985, *Frag.* 5.4: 1ff. Stein prefers an the earlier dating "vers 561," but Blockley suggests 562 (Stein 1949, p. 543; Menander 1985, p. 253: n. 26).

³⁴⁶ See note 331. This embassy is said to have taken place in the fourth year of Justin's reign (Menander 1985, *Frag.* 10.1: 1).

REMARKS

Firdawsī has done a remarkable job of presenting the history of the period in question. He is not always accurate, but his account holds its own when compared to other evidence, especially that of the Chinese sources. The propaganda that extols Khusraw as vanquisher of the Turks seems not to have infected Firdawsī's account, and this increases his credibility. All other Persian and Arabic sources pale in comparison. Theophanes' suggestion that Turkish annihilation of the Hephthalite empire was connected with the silk trade should provide stimulus for further investigation, and deeper probing in other sources of the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition might shed light on his claim.

Drungaria was poised to open a second Sassanid route to China.³⁴⁷ But Hephthalite possession of Sogdiana itself meant that Sassanid influence was reduced to a minimum. It is not always acknowledged that the Hephthalites had a considerable role to play in the history of the region. Their conquest of Sogdiana in 484 saw the destruction of the entire Sassanid army, the death of the Great King, and the loss of Iranian influence over the silk trade. Iran became tributary to the Hephthalites.³⁴⁸ Immediately after the election of Valāsh, Pērōz' brother and successor, Iran came to terms with the leaders of the 482-484 rebel movement in Armenia: the free exercise of the Christian religion was granted, and all Armenian fire temples were demolished.³⁴⁹ A famine had ravaged Iran in the days of Pērōz, and its effect was still felt in the reign of Valāsh,³⁵⁰ whose short reign bespeaks internal trouble.³⁵¹ The revolution which enthroned Kavād, Pērōz' son, was accomplished by the nobility led by the vizier Zar-Mihr—a sign that royal authority had been greatly undermined. But the son of Pērōz had been raised as a hostage at the court of the Hephthalites, and his election was a self-abasing move, calculated to appease the victorious nomads.³⁵²

³⁴⁷ The Sassanid presence in China is proved by archaeological evidence (see Valentin 1994, p. 184).

³⁴⁸ In 562 the Chinese annals note: 'The Hephthalites have now taken the Hsiang in Central Asia and have taken the Hsiang in the Hsiang (Sogdiana)'. (see Valentin 1994, p. 184). See also Stein 1949, p. 184.

³⁴⁹ Stein 1949, p. 184 n. 1.

³⁵⁰ For the famine see Stein 1949, p. 184. Stein prefers to date the famine during 'Tang Sol.' but Hsiang's reign is 482-484 (Stein 1949, p. 184). Stein 1949, p. 184 n. 1.

³⁵¹ See note 331. This embassy is said to have taken place in the tenth year of Justin's reign (Stein 1949, p. 184 n. 1).

CONCLUSION

We can now integrate the findings discussed above into the broader picture of Iranian history. The fifth century ended with a series of disturbing blows to the Iranian state and the prestige of the Shāh. The disastrous defeat of Pērōz by the Hephthalites in 484 saw the destruction of the entire Persian army, the death of the Great King, and the loss of Iranian influence over the silk trade. Iran became tributary to the Hephthalites.³⁴⁷ Immediately after the election of Valāsh, Pērōz' brother and successor, Iran came to terms with the leaders of the 482-484 rebel movement in Armenia: the free exercise of the Christian religion was granted, and all Armenian fire temples were demolished.³⁴⁸ A famine had ravaged Iran in the days of Pērōz, and its effect was still felt in the reign of Valāsh,³⁴⁹ whose short reign bespeaks internal trouble.³⁵⁰ The revolution which enthroned Kavād, Pērōz' son, was accomplished by the nobility led by the vizier Zar-Mihr—a sign that royal authority had been greatly undermined. But the son of Pērōz had been raised as a hostage at the court of the Hephthalites, and his election was a self-abasing move, calculated to appease the victorious nomads.³⁵¹

The rise of Mazdakism proceeded amidst political chaos.³⁵² Kavād may or may not have been a sincere Mazdakite, but the military and political machinery needed to oppose such a movement had ceased to function in any case. Kavād's endorsement of Mazdakism infuriated the nobility and clergy, who dethroned and imprisoned him.³⁵³ But Kavād's escape, flight to the Hephthalite court, and return with foreign reinforcements placed him on the throne a second time. His brother Jāmāsp, who had reigned in his stead, prudently abdicated. Trouble in Armenia flared up again, the mountain-dwelling tribes of Iran revolted, and the Arabs raided southern Iran.³⁵⁴ Kavād aimed to unite his splintering kingdom in a war with New Rome, and in 502 Iran invaded.

³⁴⁷ Christensen 1944, p. 294.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 290-291; p. 296.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 296-297.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 335.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 348-350.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 347-348.

The main Persian achievement was the capture of Amida, but a Hunnish invasion through the Caucasus in 505 or 506 necessitated an armistice of seven years.³⁵⁵ The foreign war probably achieved some measure of its intended purpose, as reform of the state began in the interval of peace which followed it. Caucasian defences were augmented, Kavād improved Iranian infrastructure, and began the cadastral survey which Khusraw I was to complete.³⁵⁶ The Iranian bureaucracy was evidently still potent enough to begin such a project, but incapable of finishing it in good time.

Towards 519 the question of succession arose. Kavād favoured his youngest son Khusraw over his eldest, who was a Mazdakite, and the middle son, who was blind in one eye.³⁵⁷ The adoption by the Roman emperor Justin, which Kavād proposed, might have solidified Khusraw's position, but it would also have encouraged a third influence at the Persian court, thereby disrupting the tug of war between pro-Hephthalite, Romanophil, and Mazdakite parties. But the adoption failed, undermined (as it seems) by the ambassador, whom Procopius calls Seoses.³⁵⁸ Christensen suggests that this official was an avowed Mazdakite, but I consider it more likely that he was a Hephthalite sympathiser. The persecution of the Iberians was another move calculated to show forth the king's zeal for orthodox Zoroastrianism. But Kavād went too far, and provoked another war with Rome in 527, and Khusraw inherited this conflict.³⁵⁹

Domestic stability required peace with Rome, and the so-called Eternal Peace was ratified in 532. Both Khusraw and Justinian were eager for reform, and competition between the two powers continued as each monarch regrouped lost prestige and fine-tuned the machinery of government. The age of reform in Iran was inaugurated with the suppression of Mazdakism and the liquidation of its leadership: a process which is likely to have begun towards the end of Kavād's reign and continued into that of Khusraw, whose elder brother Kāvūs revolted with Mazdakite backing in 532. Khusraw's succession, however, was guaranteed by Kavād's written command entrusted to the minister

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

Mahbūd, and Kāvūs' revolt came to nothing.³⁶⁰ Khusraw's tax reform restored a disrupted social order, and facilitated the accumulation of a cash surplus adequate to the improved structure of the Iranian army, which was divided amongst four generals, each of whom was also expected to govern a quarter of the empire.

Kavād's cadastral survey had flexed the bureaucratic muscles of the state, and Khusraw's war with Rome in 540 showcased Iran's awesome military capacity. Control of the Near East was not the object of this war: the Levantine campaign was a feint to divert Roman attention from Khusraw's real goal. Possession of Lazica—a bridgehead in the Caucasus from which to menace Constantinople by sea—was the prime objective.³⁶¹ Operations proceeded with astonishing success and the Romans were taken completely by surprise. But the victory in Lazica could not be consolidated, problems of supply led to the failure of the northern campaign, and all memory of warfare in Lazica was wiped from the page of Iranian history. Yet Khusraw's success in the Levant, despite its untimely end because of an outbreak of plague, was long remembered. War in the Near East was also animated by religion. Khusraw's supplication and auspices at the temple of Ādur-Gushnāsp not only hallowed the bellicose undertaking, but also advertised the orthodoxy of the new regime.

Despite overtures communicated by Armenian prelates, the revolt of Khusraw's son Nūsh Zād³⁶² in 543 was a Christian *coup* in which the Romans failed to involve themselves. But the pitch and moment of the revolt can be gauged not only by Syrian fascination which transformed it into an epic, but also by Armenian mythologising which turned Khusraw himself into a witness to the faith. Details regarding the preservation of this tale and its introduction into the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition cannot be known, given the state of the evidence. But we might infer that successive kings, who exerted jurisdiction over *all* Iran, encouraged the cult of a royal martyr, perhaps also spreading the rumours that Khusraw himself had converted, and thereby drew Persian Christians closer to the throne.

Khusraw was too much preoccupied with the *dénouement* of the war begun in 540 and an ongoing crackdown on corruption to take any

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

³⁶¹ Howard-Johnston 2008, p. 80.

³⁶² Christensen 1944, p. 383.

military action against the Hephthalites in the late 550s or early 560s.³⁶³ Iranian foreign policy had been directed away from Mesopotamia towards the Caucasus for some time, but it was about to shift again toward Central Asia. Khusraw's diplomacy connived at a Turkish and Hephthalite war, and Iranian interests, especially those pertaining to the silk trade, were, at least for the moment, unfringed. An Iranian presence was established in many former Hephthalite territories, though we are not certain exactly where, but cultural pollination from India has left its mark on the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition. The destruction of the Hephthalite menace gave a massive boost to Iranian prestige, and domestic propaganda gave Khusraw the credit for avenging Pērōz' ignominious defeat. No less impressive was Khusraw's siphoning off four Turkish tribes from the khāqānate in 568, the very moment when the Khāqān was attempting to form an alliance with the Romans.

Despite the Iranian conquest of Yemen, whereby the Romans were completely outflanked, Khusraw's reign did not end on a high note. Roman emperor Justin II ended the tribute, and provoked an uprising in Armenia in 572.³⁶⁴ In the ensuing war the aged Khusraw himself took the field and captured Dara, while Justin sank into decrepitude and idiocy. But once again victory was short-lived: though Khusraw destroyed Sebaste and Melitene in 576, much of his army perished when the Romans pursued them across the Euphrates.³⁶⁵ In 577 Rome and Iran again began to negotiate the terms of peace, but Khusraw died in 579 and his son Hurmazd IV continued the war. Needless to say, none of these grim reverses are noticed in the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition, which portrays Khusraw's reign as uniformly glorious and successful, as it is remembered to this day.

³⁶³ Contra Christensen 1944, p. 373.

³⁶⁴ Christensen 1944, p. 374.

³⁶⁵ Whitby 1988, p. 262-268.

APPENDIX

A TRANSLATION OF DĪNAWARĪ'S NARRATIVE OF THE REIGN OF KHUSRAW I

When king Qubādh reached his forty-third [regnal] year, death was upon him, and he gave power to his son Kisrā, namely Anūsharwān. He was king after his father, and he ordered a search for Mazdak son of Māzayyār, who had made the people believe in doing forbidden things, and by such baseness provoked the commission of sin, and facilitated the height of rapine and of injustice.¹ And he was sought until found, and Anūsharwān ordered his murder and impaling, and the killing of whoever else had joined the sect.

Then Kisrā Anūsharwān split the kingdom into four quarters, and set over each quarter a trustworthy man. The first quarter was Khurāsān and Sijistān and Kirmān; the second was Iṣbahān, Qumm, Jabal, Ādharbayjān and Armīniya; the third was Fārs, Ahwāz down to Bahrayn; the fourth was 'Irāq unto the border with the Kingdom of Rūm. And among these four he extended to each man the utmost dignity and esteem.

And he sent his army into the country of the Hephthalites, and conquered Tukhāristān, Zābulistān, Kābulistān, and Ṣighānīyān. The king of the Turks, Sinjibū Khāqān, gathered unto himself the people of his kingdom and he prepared himself [for war]. He went towards the land of Khurāsān until he conquered Shāsh,² Farghāna, Samarqand, Kash,³ and Nasaf, and he ended in Bukhārā. [News of] this reached Kisrā and he entrusted his son Hurmazd (who was king after him) with a copious army and sent him to fight the Turkish Khāqān. He marched until he found himself near him,⁴ who abandoned what he had conquered, and returned to his country. Kisrā wrote to his son Hurmizd that he should return.

The say also that Khālīd⁵ b. Jabala the Ghassānid made a raid on Nu'mān son of Mundhir, namely Mundhir the second, for there were two

¹ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 69: 1. 10: للغضبية الغضب وللظلمة الظلم

² Dīnawarī 1888, p. 69: 1. 18: الشاش. Arabised form of the Persian Chāch, now Tashkent in to-day's Uzbekistan. See Pourshariati 2010, p. 220.

³ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 69: 19: كش. A city near Samarqand and the birth place of Tamberlane, unnoticed in Pourshariati's *Historical Geography* (Pourshariati 2010).

⁴ i.e., the Khāqān.

⁵ This is an error, perhaps arising from a misreading of the original Pahlavi for Hārith (Bosworth 1999, p. 252: n. 611).

Mundhirs and two Nu'māns, as Mundhir the first was he whom Bahrām Jūr had put in power, but Mundhir the second was in the time of Kistrā Anūsharwān, and they were Kistrā's governors on the frontier of the land of the Arabs. And he⁶ killed some of the companions of Mundhir with great butchery, and he drove away the camels of al-Mundhir and his horses. And Mundhir wrote to Kistrā Anūsharwān telling him what Khālīd son of Jabala had perpetrated on him. And Kistrā wrote to Qayṣar that he should demand blood money from Khālīd [paid] to Mundhir for killing Khālīd's companions, and to return what he had taken of his chattels. Qayṣar did not take note of his letter and Kistrā prepared himself for battle with him. And he marched until he penetrated the lands of Mesopotamia,⁷ which were under Roman control at the time and he possessed himself of Dārā, and the city Ruhā, and the city Qinnasrīn,⁸ and the city Manbij,⁹ and the city Ḥalīb, until he arrived in Anṭākīya. And he took it, as it was the greatest city in Syria and Mesopotamia, and he took captive its people, the people of Anṭākīya, and he carried them off to 'Irāq. He commanded and a city was built for them by the side of Ṭaysfūn, answering to the construction of the city Anṭākīya in its lanes and its streets and in its houses, for nothing was missing from it at all. He called it Zabīr-Khusrū, and it is the city which is beside Madā'in, which is called Rūmīya. Then the people were sent into it. Every man passed by a likeness of his house that was in his city Anṭākīya. And he appointed over them a lieutenant to command them, a man from the Christians of Ahwāz, called Yazdfanā.

Qayṣar wrote to Kistrā asking for a peace treaty and the return of what he had taken for himself among those cities, on the condition that he should pay to him a fixed levy every year, for Kistrā hated being oppressive. And Kistrā accepted what Qayṣar had offered, and entrusted the annual collection and transmission thereof to Sharwīn al-Dastabāī. And he stayed there with the king of Rome, and Khurrīn his famous slave, a victorious and brave horseman, was with him.¹⁰

When Kistrā began to leave the land of Syria, a severe disease came

⁶ i.e., Khālīd.

⁷ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 70: l. 12: الجزيرة, as it still called.

⁸ i.e., Chalcis in Syria.

⁹ A city in northern Syria, called Mabbough in Syriac, and Hierapolis Bambyce in Greek.

¹⁰ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 71: ll. 5-6: خرّین مملوکه المشهور الخبر وكان نجدا فارسا بطلا

upon him. And he sought rest in the city Ḥimṣ. And he stayed in it with his army until he recovered. And Qayṣar began to gather his army to himself in order to withdraw.

They say that Kistrā had a son who was called Anūsh Zādh, whose mother was a Christian endowed with beauty. And Kistrā had pleasure in her and wished that she should leave Christianity and enter Magianism, but she refused, and her son Anūsh Zādh inherited this from her, and he was at variance with his father in religion. And he became angry with him and ordered his imprisonment in the city Jundaysābūr. And when Kistrā attacked Syria, and news of his illness and location at Ḥimṣ reached Anūsh Zādh, he beguiled the people of the prison and sent messengers of his among the Christians of Jundaysābūr and the whole province of Ahwāz. And he had broken the prison, and he went forth and those Christians gathered round him. And he cast out his father's governors from the district of Ahwāz and possessed himself of their goods. He circulated a rumour about the death of his father and prepared himself to march towards 'Irāq. His deputy in the city Ṭaysfūn wrote, giving him news of his son, and what he had done. Kistrā wrote to him:

"Send the armies against him, and seize him in battle: be cunning that thou mayest capture him! If fate come upon him that he be killed, [his] most despicable blood, and most wayward soul [have deserved it]. For the wise man knoweth that the purity of the world is not perfect and its pardon endureth not. For if there were any thing that were free of suspicion, then surely it would be the rain which vivifieth the unliving earth, or surely it would be the daylight which cometh to men that sleep, and lighteneth them that are blind. But despite this, how much suffering is in the rain, and our keeping it away from buildings? And how much dread is in its floods and lightnings? And how much harm and corruption is in the noonday sun? Uproot the swarms with thy blade, and let not the great multitude of them affright thee, for their thorns remain nolonger. How shall the Christians remain, when in their religion a man among them must offer his right cheek when his left cheek is struck? If Anūsh Zādh and his followers surrender, do thou send back to their cells those among them that had been in prison, but without increasing their distress and dearth of food and clothing. But whoever among them was from the class of knights, do thou cut off his head, and allow not from thyself any mercy upon them. And whoever among them were baseborn and criminals, do thou kill them and take no heed of them. I have understood that thou hast mentioned about the punishments inflicted by thee upon the multitude who reviled Anūsh Zādh publicly and [who] mentioned his

mother [also]. For I know that they are possessed of a hidden malice and secret hostility, and they accomplished the abuse of Anūsh Zādh on a pretext to slander us, and as a ladder to offending us.¹¹ Thou hast done well in thy punishment of them. Permit no one to imitate what they say. Peace."

When Kisrā recovered from his disease, and withdrew together with his army to the land of his dominion, his son Anūsh Zādh had been taken prisoner, and it was unto Anūsh Zādh as *Kisrā* had commanded.

They say that the Persian kings imposed a customary rate of taxation¹² upon the crops of the lands, by the division¹³ of a half, a third, a quarter, or fifth up to a tenth commensurate with the proximity of the estate to the cities, and according to the quantity of growth and yield. But Qubādh wished to overthrow this system and establish a *kharāj*, but he died before the cadastral survey was complete. But Kisrā Anūsharwān ordered its completion. He gave orders to the scribes, and they set forth and expressed in detail the levying and imposition of the *jizya* on four social classes, but they exempted from it the nobility, the *marzbāns*, the knights, and the scribes, and anyone in the service of the king. No one was compelled to pay who had not attained twenty years, or who had passed fifty years. And this imposition was written in three copies: one copy which Kisrā's own *diwān* preserved, one copy which was dispatched to the tax office, and one copy which was presented to the magistrates in the countryside, in order that the tax-collectors might abstain from transgressing what was [written] in the copy¹⁴ that was with them. And he commanded that the *kharāj* be collected in three instalments. He called the place in which it was collected the *Sarāy Samarra*,¹⁵ and the explanation of this is "the place of three installments," and it is the place which is known to-day as *Shimarraj*,¹⁶ and it has also been said by way of explanation that it means "the place of calculation," for *hisāb* is *shamarra* in Persian. This word, which is

¹¹ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 72: l. 16: مرقاة الى ذكرنا

¹² Dīnawarī 1888, p. 72: l. 20: شينا معروفا. This is rather similar to the expression as used by Ṭabarī in the same context (Ṭabarī 1893, p. 960: l. 19): شينا معلوما

¹³ مقاسمات (Dīnawarī 1888, p. 72: l. 20): Something like "fraction" or "rate" is probably implied.

¹⁴ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 73: l. 8: الدستور

¹⁵ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 73: ll. 9-10: سرای سمره

¹⁶ Dīnawarī 1888, p. 73: l. 10: شمرج

understood in the Persian language to this day, they call the *kharāj shimarra* with the letter *shīn*, in order to mean "calculation." The capitation tax was lifted from the poor and the chronically ill, and likewise was the crop tax, and it was lifted from what misfortune had afflicted commensurate with the loss done to it. And Kisrā put in charge of all this a trusty group of just people who were to implement it and impose the tax upon people equitably.

There had not yet been among the Persian kings a king who had gathered together the various disciplines of humanities and wisdom, nor one who had taken interest in science. But Kisrā approached the people of literature and knowledge, and he recognised their virtue. The greatest of the *savants* of his age was Buzurjmīhr son of Bakhtakān, and he was among the wise men of the Persians and one of their intelligent men. Kisrā preferred him over his *vazīrs* and scholars of his age.

Kisrā put in charge of the war office one of the scribes, a man who was distinguished and renowned for intellect and ability, who was called Bābak son of Nihrawān. And he said to Kisrā:

"O king! Verily thou hast invested me with command, by virtue of which thou shalt endure from me a measure of harshness in the matters pertaining to military inspection every four months. Do thou take every manner of equipment in full, etc. What follows does not differ significantly from Ṭabarī's account. Some interesting terms for armour appear here (ll. 16-19), but the anecdote is largely without historical value apart from its probably accurate description of military accoutrements. I abridge and resume at p. 75: l. 9.

They say that Kaskar was a small region. Kisrā Anūsharwān therefore added to it some of Bahurasīr province and Hurmizd province and the *khurra* and province of Maysān, and thus he enlarged it. And he made it into two districts:¹⁷ one district was Jundaysābūr and one district was Zandaward, and Bajūkhāy province, and Khusrūmāh province. And he made for it six municipalities: one municipality was Ṭaysfūn, that is Madā'in and Ṭaysfūn the town that is on the Tigris three parasangs below Qibāb Ḥumayd, which is called in Nabataean Ṭaysfūnaj, and one district was Jāzir, and one district was Kalwādhā, and one municipality was Nahr Būq, and one district was Jalūlā, and one district was Nahr al-Malik.

¹⁷ طسوجين (p. 75: l. 11): lit. "two tracts of land." It is hard to find an appropriate translation for طسوج, and "district" will have to suffice.

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L'auteur a choisi et examiné trois textes — *l'al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* par Dīnawarī, la *Sīrat Ānūsharwān*, et le *Shāhnāma* de Firdawsī — en vue de réévaluer l'hypothèse de Nöldeke selon laquelle il existait une chronique dynastique sassanide, désignée par le terme *Khudāy-Nāma*, qui aurait servi de source à tous les historiographes arabo-persanes. En confrontant la description que chacun des trois textes donne de quatre événements historiques importants à l'époque de Khusraw I (531-579), l'auteur met en évidence l'indépendance de ces trois textes et donc de la non-existence d'une source commune, le *Khudāy-Nāma*. À partir des informations que la confrontation des trois textes a apportées, l'auteur présente en guise de conclusion un récit plus nuancé de cette époque.

This *cahier* deals with the criticism of three sources: Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, the so-called *Sīrat Ānūsharwān*, and Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. The need to examine these sources arises from a re-evaluation of Nöldeke's *Khudāy-Nāma* hypothesis; a case is built for the independence and utility of those three sources; and four test cases follow, in which the sources are put to work on issues of central importance in the history of sixth-century Iran. The conclusion is a narrative integrating the findings of the test cases into the broad picture of Sasanian history.